

# PAUL JONES



## WEEKLY

STORIES OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

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No. 10

NEW YORK, DECEMBER 2, 1905.

Price, Five Cents

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OR HOW THE VIRGINIA PLANTER  
INVADED "ROBBER ROOST"



CAPT. LUTHER BARR

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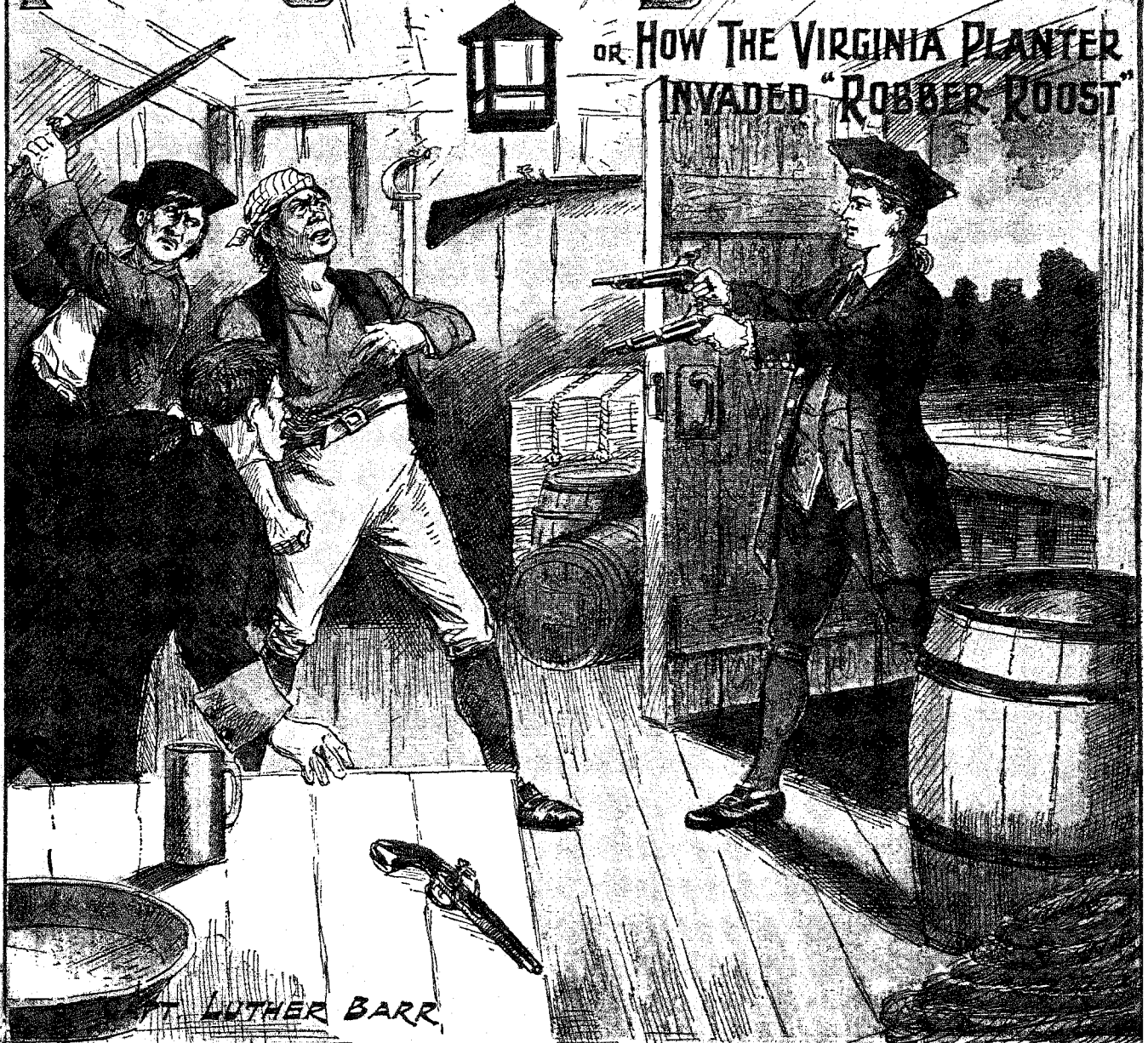
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**PUBLISHER'S NOTE:** At some time or other the fascination of life at sea takes hold upon the imagination of the average lad who has healthy red blood in his veins. From the day he is able to read the stirring adventures of Robinson Crusoe, a yearning to travel and look upon strange sights the world over takes possession of him. Usually this gradually gives way to the less strenuous pleasures that surround him at home, but in innumerable instances it has led young fellows to go forth to seek their fortune. And surely, of all thrilling stories concerning the wonders of a life upon the ocean wave, none are so apt to arouse the intense interest of Young America as the famous and dashing exploits of that heroic sailor of Revolutionary days, Paul Jones. His fearless voyages would fill volumes; and believing that a hearty welcome would be given to the publication of a series containing his adventures, we have placed the PAUL JONES WEEKLY before our American boys.

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# PAUL JONES' DEFIANCE

OR,

## How the Virginia Planter Invaded "Robber Roost."

By CAPT. LUTHER BARR.

### CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

**Paul Jones**, the most remarkable character of the Revolutionary War—a young sea adventurer, whose daring deeds have long been told in song and story; whose name thrilled the whole world, and created a reign of terror along the coasts of Great Britain when he battled with and conquered some of the best war ships of the British navy, while his own was but little better than a "tub"—a man who knew not the meaning of the word "fear," and who was as gallant as he was brave.

**Captain Cockle**, a desperate adventurer who has tried to get the best of Captain Jones on several occasions.

**Gilpin**, a ferryman who is always ready to help Jones.

**Alec Gilpin**, his son, who admires the young captain so much that he wants to leave home and ship with Jones.

**Duncan Macbean**, superintendent of Paul Jones' estate in Virginia.

**Cato and Scipio**, two faithful slaves of the young captain. They prove their worth on many occasions.

**Samuel Swallow**, the man who thinks he is the Beau Brummell of the colony of Virginia.

**Terence O'Malley**, a lively Irishman who adds to the interest of the story.

**Betsy Cronin**, a very cunning woman who tries to steal the papers left in Paul Jones' keeping.

**Captain Biddle**, who does not appear in the story until nearly the end, but who is a very important personage just the same.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE EBONY BOX.

"Capt. Paul Jones, Col. Washington!"

"Ah! He comes by appointment, Mr. Henry. Pray admit him."

Patrick Henry pulled the door wide open.

"Come in, captain," he smiled; "you're expected."

The young planter entered the room and was greeted with warm handclaps from the other two gentlemen present—Col. Washington and Mr. Hewes.

"You have been for some time in Williamsburg, Paul," said Mr. Hewes, "and I regret that I could not have seen you before; but Col. Washington and Mr. Henry have told me what you discovered to the south of Norfolk—how British mercenaries are committing piratical acts

along our shores, under supposed connivance of ministers of the Crown."\*

"Twas a gallant service," observed Col. Washington, "but no more than might be expected from Capt. Jones."

Patrick Henry's thin face grew animated, and his eyes sparkled.

"Unless I am sore mistaken," said he, "we shall stand in need of such a man as Paul Jones before we are many months older."

"We stand in need of him now," returned Mr. Hewes.

"That is why he is here," added Col. Washington.

"My sword," said the young captain gallantly, "and my life, as well, are at the service of these oppressed Colonies. I am a Virginian to the core——"

Henry leaned forward and dropped a hand on his arm.

"Say, rather, Capt. Paul," he broke in, "that you are an American. That is better than saying you are a Virginian. We are all Americans!"

And thus early did Patrick Henry voice a sentiment which, later in that memorable year of 1774, was to ring through Carpenters' Hall, in Philadelphia. Under the noble Henry's magic eloquence, it was to carry the Continental Congress by storm.

"Ay," cried the young planter, clapping hand to the sword at his side and straightening his broad shoulders, "I am an American, an' it please you, and hope in my soul that presently I may have a chance to prove my right to the title!"

The older men smiled approval of the youth's enthusiasm.

"Your sloop is handily by, Capt. Paul?" queried Mr. Hewes.

"In the York River, sir, off Yorktown."

"And you are ready for a quick journey back to her?"

"My boy, Cæsar, is holding the horses at the tavern door. I take the road the minute I leave this room."

"Always ready," murmured Col. Washington, a shade of admiration crossing his grave features.

The conference was being held in the best room of Master Gay's coffee house, in Nicholson Street.

The conversation, when it came to the particular matter

\*These discoveries, of deep significance to the patriot leaders in the Colonies at this time, were made by the dashing young sailor-planter several days before. The chronicle of his thrilling adventures that led up to the discoveries is set forth in No. 9 of the PAUL JONES WEEKLY, "Paul Jones' Swamp Trail; or, Outwitting the Coast Raiders."

that concerned the patriots, was in low voices; and every thing else had been done to insure its privacy.

From the breast of his broadcloth coat Mr. Hewes drew a small, ebony box.

"This box, Capt. Paul," said he, placing the object on the table, "contains instructions and other papers of great value. Were they to fall into the hands of the king's men, the king's ministers would make the lot of these devoted Colonies even more bitter and unhappy than it is at present—and we have woes enough now, Heaven knows.

"There is no one to whom I could intrust the box with more confidence than to you. You are to take it to your plantation, guard it with your life, if necessary, and deliver it only to the man who will call for it with a written order from Mr. Adams. That man, an' he be the right one, has the key. To make assurance doubly sure, you will have him produce the key and open the box in your presence."

"You may rely upon me, sir," said Paul Jones, calmly. "Who is this man who is to call for the box?"

Mr. Hewes exchanged glances with Mr. Henry and Col. Washington.

"That," he went on, "I cannot tell you. The box will be called for, and you are to deliver it when you have made certain the man who calls is entitled to it."

"Very well, gentlemen; the matter will be attended to in exact accordance with your instructions."

Mr. Hewes drew a long breath.

"I feel even safer with the box in your possession than in my own," he murmured. "Perform this service faithfully, and I assure you you have friends who will not forget it."

"If I am aiding the cause of America against an unjust king," answered Paul Jones, "the work is its own reward."

Once more the patriot leaders pressed his hand warmly. Capt. Paul stowed the little box safely away in the breast of his coat and took his departure.

As he descended the stairs and passed through the long, well-filled public room of the coffee house, a man started up from an obscure corner.

He was a heavy-set, broad-shouldered person, and, although he wore a shirt of coarse dowlas and leather breeches, the roll in his gait would have proved to anyone that his calling was the sea.

Furthermore, his head was bound in a piece of dirty

men, and from under the bandage his eyes glared tigerishly at Capt. Paul.

For a moment the man stood watching the retreating form of the young sailor-planter, then hurriedly passed out of the room at a side entrance.

In front of the coffee house a negro lad was sitting on one horse and holding another by the reins.

"All right, Cæsar?" asked Capt. Paul, taking the reins from the negro's hand.

"All right, Marse Paul," answered Cæsar. "Is we wine to Yawktown, sah?"

"With all dispatch."

Capt. Paul swung to the saddle.

He did not start immediately, but pulled up in a glow of light that issued from a window of the coffee house.

Taking a pair of pistols from their red velvet holsters in front of him, he examined them carefully.

"Must be Marse Cap'n is lookin' fo' trouble on de Yawktown road," thought Cæsar; then he chuckled. Golly! If any trouble comes, I'd suah hate to be at de dder end ob it when Marse Cap'n has dem flintlock oppin' machines in his hands."

Having satisfied himself that the pistols were in order, Capt. Paul thrust them back into their holsters, gathered up the reins and spurred along the darkened and half-deserted street.

Presently they turned from Nicholson into Duke of Gloucester Street, a broad, unpaved, dusty thoroughfare, edged with mulberries and poplars, and stretching from the gate of William and Mary College to the brick façade of the Capitol.

Here gay blades of the town, in groups or singly, were proceeding homeward, lighted on their way by spluttering flambeaus in the hands of link-boys.

Many a rollicking and half-tipsy song was in the air, but young Capt. Paul gave no attention to sights or sounds along the way.

With bowed head he rode onward, Cæsar following him by two or three horses' lengths.

Skirting a meadow that formed part of the college grounds, they plunged through a grove of elms and were soon fairly on the road to the York River.

Here Capt. Paul struck into a planter's pace, pulling his riding cloak snugly about him to keep out the flying dust.

The miles slipped away from under his horse's hoofs.

The youth could feel the ebony box pressing against

his breast under his waistcoat, and the thought that he was to gain the York without placing the precious papers in jeopardy filled him with deep satisfaction.

Nevertheless, in Capt. Paul's life he had been taught that the unexpected was the thing that usually happened.

In a little while the horseman descended a low hill, and when they reached the foot of it the glimmer of a light was seen in advance, in a tangle of timber that edged both sides of the road.

Sounds reached the ears of Capt. Paul, too—a tramp as of frightened horses coupled with an oath in a hoarse voice.

A moment later there came a wild call in shrill, feminine tones:

"Help! Oh, is there no one to protect me? Help!"

The gallant, young planter was not the one to hang back in the face of such an appeal.

Since his sword was ever his favorite weapon, he drew it, shouted for Cæsar to follow, and raced toward the light ahead.

As he drew nearer, the flickering gleam resolved itself into a lanthorn, carried beside a driver on a ponderous coach.

The coach had four sable horses attached, and at the heads of the leaders was a mounted man, barring the way and pointing a pistol at the negro on the box.

Another man had dismounted at the coach door, which was flung open.

In a twinkling, Capt. Paul drew a pistol with his left hand and fired at the fellow at the horses' heads—fired as he galloped, and with the dark night making him none too sure in his aim.

Capt. Paul could use either hand with equal facility, and but for the darkness, and the wild pace at which he rode, he well knew that the bullet would have found its mark.

As it was, the man at the horses' heads fired a weapon of his own, so that a bullet sang uncomfortably close to Capt. Paul's ear.

After making use of his own pistol, the fellow wheeled about and vanished in the darkness of the timber.

The young planter swept on toward the other man.

That individual, however, showed the white feather.

Hurling himself astride his horse, he was away before the young planter's slashing sword could reach him.

Capt. Paul did not give pursuit; his concern was

chiefly for the woman in distress, whose voice had brought him to the scene.

Pulling his horse back opposite the swinging coach door, he peered into the interior of the vehicle.

The darkness there was so intense he could see nothing.

"Oh, mah po' missis!" wailed the black coachman. "What have dem robbahs done to mah po' missis?"

He started as though he would abandon the four plunging horses, leap to the ground and investigate his mistress' condition.

Had he carried out his intention, a runaway would have been imminent.

"Stay where you are," ordered Capt. Paul, "and hold the horses!" Then, leaning further into the coach, he cried: "I say, madame! Are you alone? I trust you are uninjured?"

A choking moan was the only reply.

Hastily sheathing his sword, Capt. Paul slipped clear of the saddle and climbed into the coach.

In another instant, a pair of steellike arms went round him and he was thrown backward upon one of the seats.

Simultaneously, the door of the coach was slammed shut; and thereupon a voice hissed in his ear:

"Those papers! Give me those papers intrusted to you by the archtraitors, Washington, Hewes and Henry, or, by Heaven, your life pays the forfeit!"

## CHAPTER II.

### THE TABLES TURNED.

Capt. Paul Jones had been neatly trapped.

Nothing but the appeal of a woman, seemingly in distress, could have tempted him to hazard the valuable box so recently consigned to his care.

The villainous play had been bravely carried out, and at no little risk to the players.

The patriot leaders, who had requested Jones to take the box to his plantation and hold it until called for, had thrown as much secrecy as possible about their plans and operations.

That the secret of the papers was out was due rather to Tory guile and vigilance rather than to any lack of cautiousness on the part of the patriots.

While not expecting to encounter difficulties, Capt. Paul was on the alert for them; but he would have looked upon himself as a heartless wretch had he passed a woman who needed aid, and failed to give it.

The two men who had seemingly fled had presumably not retired far enough to get out of the plot.

One or other of them had slammed the coach door.

Directly after the hissing demand for the papers had been made, the black coachman put his four horses the gallop, and the lumbering vehicle swayed and bounded at a terrific speed.

Although trapped, the daring, young captain was not captured.

"You get nothing from me!" he cried, defiantly, exerting all his wonderful strength.

"Struggle at your peril, Capt. Jones!" came a woman voice, with a hiss like a venomous serpent. "Here! Do feel this?"

A point of cold steel was pressed against the young captain's forehead.

"We take the papers," the merciless voice went on "whether it be from you alive or dead!"

The blank darkness inside the coach prevented Capt. Paul from seeing a thing.

He was fighting in the dark with a woman and a man for his unknown foes.

Without the coach he knew there were at least three more enemies—the negro driver and the two miscreants who had simulated flight in order to avoid his weapons.

Much as he disliked battling with a woman, no other choice was left open to the young captain.

Although somewhat slender and of only medium height, Capt. Paul had a superb breadth of shoulders and was noted for his strength and prowess.

His arms were pinioned at his sides by the man, but his feet were free, and he used them with such sudden and telling effect that the woman was thrown back in the coach with a cry of pain, her pistol dropping from her hand.

Capt. Paul then gave his attention to the man.

The swaying of the coach rolled them from the seat at that precise instant, the young captain summoned all his strength for a supreme effort and broke from his antagonist's arms.

The report of a pistol followed; and it must have been the woman who fired, for Capt. Paul's enemy, with a groan of pain, tumbled helplessly at the young planter's feet.

A cry of consternation broke from the woman's lips.

The moment was ripe for escape, and Capt. Paul took advantage of it.

Had he not been the guardian of that ebony box, he would have followed his bent and remained with his unknown enemies until there had been developments more in accord with strict justice; as it was, he felt that he must not tarry a moment, now that escape lay open to him.

With a stout kick he sent the coach door crashing outward.

Wounded though the other man was, he made one despairing effort to detain Paul Jones.

There was a final struggle, albeit a brief one, and when the young planter gained the road—which he did on hands and knees, and roughly, as might be expected—he was gripping a memento of the baffled plot in the shape of a wig.

The two horsemen, who had enacted the rôle of robbers, were galloping along ahead of the coach, which was traveling in the direction of Williamsburg.

They had heard the shooting, and had witnessed the young planter's leap into the road.

The black tugged at the reins and the horsemen started back.

At the selfsame moment, the frightened Cæsar came flopping up with his master's horse.

"Is dat you, Marse Cap'n?" queried the black, peering at the figure in the road.

"Ay, Cæsar!" answered Capt. Paul, springing erect.

"Is yo' hurted, marse?"

"In no way," was the answer, as the young captain leaped to his horse's back and drew from its holster the pistol he still had.

A shot over his left arm wounded one of the approaching riders; and immediately he used his spurs and charged the other.

This onslaught, from a man who appeared to be invincible, was too much for the rascals, and they whirled and fled in the wake of the coach, the uninjured man supporting his wounded comrade.

Capt. Paul drew rein and faced the other way with a grim laugh.

"The rogues have had their trouble and some hard talking for their pains," he muttered; "they'll think twice before they attempt to trick Paul Jones in that way again."

"Ain't yo' gwine to foller 'em, Marse Cap'n?" asked he surprised Cæsar, who well knew what a hot spark his master was when dealt with as he had been that night.

"No, Cæsar," was the reply. "There is other business in hand, and we have scant time. There is an ordinary near here, an' I mistake not. We will take a short rest at the place."

The ordinary was at a crossroads, half a mile further on the way to the York.

Its windows were dark, but a few lusty blows on the front door brought a glow from above, and a night-capped head was thrust out and demanded their business.

"Half an hour's rest and a bottle of Madeira," answered Paul Jones. "At the same time, friend, I would have a few words with you on an important matter."

The landlord hastily dressed himself, descended and admitted Capt. Paul into the public room.

The Madeira was set forth, and a glass of it ordered to be taken to Cæsar, who was looking to the horses.

While the landlord was in front of his establishment, the young captain examined the wig that had come with him out of the coach.

It was a Blenheim wig, of goat's hair, bushy at the sides and with a long, plaited tail, ornamented with a ribbon at the top of the braid and at the bottom.

The color was black, and on one side the hair wore a brown and singed look.

Capt. Paul seemed startled.

He had seen such a wig not many days before, and was wondering if it were possible to identify the wearer of the wig by the wig itself.

When the landlord returned, the young captain began to quiz him.

"Are we the first travelers you entertained this night?"

"Nay, sir," replied the landlord, "my establishment was honored by a lady of quality, who came to it in a coach and four, with a black for driver, and two outriders, and a companion who, I took it, was more a guard than a friend."

"When was this?" asked Capt. Paul.

The landlord's description tallied with the party just met and worsted on the road.

"They came some two hours since, and bided until half an hour ago, when a strapping big fellow, in dowlas shirt and leathern breeches, his head swathed in a bandage, came and had talk with the lady and her escort. They left immediately after."

"Tell me more about this man who seemed to be the lady's companion."

"He was brown, sir, almost like an Indian, and wore jack boots, and talked and walked like a sailor. By my faith, ye have there his wig, or one like it."

The landlord pointed to the piece of headgear on the table.

"Did you learn the name of the lady, or of any of her companions?" asked Capt. Paul.

"Nay, sir, they were close-mouthed, and said little in my hearing."

"Did the man with the bandage around his head go away with the rest?"

"I think not. When the coach left, I did not see him among the others. However, he went from the inn at the same time the rest did."

The young planter would have asked more questions, but at that juncture Cæsar was heard from.

"Marse Cap'n! Marse Cap'n!"

The boy was excited over something, as the young planter could easily tell.

Leaping up from the table, he ran out of the inn, the landlord tight at his heels.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE MAN WITH THE BANDAGED HEAD.

Exciting events were crowding fast upon each other that night.

When Capt. Paul reached the entrance, he saw a most surprising scene in the light that came from the public room of the inn.

Cæsar was sitting up on the ground a few feet away from his horse.

He was holding his woolly head in his hands and had evidently been struck from the saddle with a fierce blow.

A large man, wearing dowlas shirt and leather breeches and having his head bandaged, was trying to mount the negro's horse.

With one foot in the stirrup, the man was seeking to rise to the saddle; but the horse, no doubt frightened by the rough work that had just been done across its back, was leaping sideways, so that the man was obliged to hop on one foot, and could not find opportunity to mount.

The fellow was swearing heartily.

At sight of Capt. Paul and the landlord, the man made one more desperate attempt.

"That's the fellow we were speaking about, sir!" cried the landlord.

The horse, still further terrified by the hurried approach of Capt. Paul and the landlord, reared upward.

The man who was seeking to mount was cast to the ground, and came within an ace of being trampled on.

Breaking from his hand, the horse snorted and galloped along the road.

"Take my mount, Cæsar," cried Capt. Paul, "and catch the other horse."

The black regained his feet and was soon in Capt. Paul's saddle.

While he dashed away after the horse, the young planter took after the man who had caused the trouble.

That worthy, recognizing his peril, sprang up and flung away into the darkness as fast as his legs could carry him.

He did not keep to the road, but turned from it into the brush and timber at the roadside.

Capt. Paul, knowing he would have a bootless chase if he gave pursuit, returned to the inn, regained possession of the wig and stood in the door with the landlord awaiting the return of the black boy.

"If that rascal had a horse," said Capt. Paul, "what should he want another?"

"His horse was far spent, sir," answered the landlord. "I noticed that, when he left here. I'll lay ye a puncheon that he and the rest o' the rascally crew are ripe for the hangman. But the woman! She seemed like a person of consequence, sir, and it passed my wits that she should be in such company."

"Was there anything about her by which she could be identified if seen again?"

"There was a scar, as I remember, or a birthmark it may be, on her right cheek: a little, red line in shape like a letter 'S.' And she was passing fair, sir, though I can take my oath not over young. But the wig! May I ask how you came in possession of it?"

Capt. Paul did not set the landlord's mind at rest to the way he had secured the Blenheim wig.

Cæsar came clattering up, just then, leading the runaway horse. Under cover of his arrival, Capt. Paul found it easy to ignore the landlord's question.

"I's got de horse, Marse Cap'n," said Cæsar.

"How came you to lose him, lad?"

"You seen dat man wif de cloth tied 'round his haid?"

"Yes."

"Well, sah, I sat heah waitin' fo' you, when dat man comes 'round de co'nah ob de inn. He comes so sudden



x dat mah horse begins to r'ar, an' while I's trying to .iet de horse, dat man comes longside an' give me a bow on de side ob de haid dat makes me see stahs. Next knowed I was on de ground, an' de man was tryin' to st on de back ob mah horse. Den you come, Marse ap'n, an' you know de rest."

"Barring a slight delay," said Capt. Paul, swinging to s own saddle when Cæsar had changed horses, "we're p'ne the worse off for the rascal's attempt to get away ith the mount."

"I's got a roarin' in mah eahs, marse, dat's far from mfo'table," muttered Cæsar, tenderly rubbing the side his head.

The young planter paid no attention to the rueful remark, but loaded his pistols and returned them carefully to the red velvet holsters; then, settling with the dlord, he clapped spurs to his horse and was soon off ce more on the way to Yorktown.

The young patriot was not a little puzzled in his mind. From all he could learn, the man who had assisted the man inside the coach was none other than a piratical alawag who sailed under the name of Skull-and-Cross-nes Cockle.

Capt. Paul thought he had left Skipper Cockle in the eat swamp south of Norfolk; and thus to encounter m, after a lapse of several days, on the road to York iver, was in the nature of a tremendous surprise.

Cockle, bearing Capt. Paul a black grudge, had sworn have his life.

This vow in nowise worried the young planter, for he as ready to settle scores with Cockle wherever and when-er that worthy deemed best to try conclusions.

By the same token, the fellow with the bandaged head as recognized by Capt. Paul as Cockle's right-hand an. If it hadn't been for the young planter the rascal's had would never have needed a bandage, so the rogue ad sufficient cause for enmity on his own account.

But how was it that Skipper Cockle and the disguised an-o'-war's man had trimmed their sails on this new ck bothered the young planter not a little.

The woman in the case did not cause him so much onder.

She was probably Tory, and filled with an ardent desire help the king's cause, no matter to what extreme she ight be driven.

With such thoughts as these Capt. Paul beguiled the mainder of his journey.

By dawn he and Cæsar had reached Yorktown, and had returned their hired mounts to the liveryman of whom they had been secured for the ride to Williamsburg; and by early morning the two had rejoined the twenty-ton sloop belonging to Capt. Paul, and she was picking her way down the river.

The winds served poorly, and it was the forenoon of the next day before the boat drove into the Rappahan-nock.

Capt. Paul was standing well forward with Alec Gil-pin, a lad who had accompanied him on the cruise to Norfolk, as they drew in sight of the plantation.

The warehouse and the landing unfolded slowly before their eyes.

"Great Jemimy, captain!" cried Alec. "There's a crowd around your warehouse, an' it ain't a crowd o' blacks, neither."

The young planter had already descried the throng.

When the sloop came closer he made out the faces of some of the neighboring planters, and also discovered that his landing was filled with barges and other small craft, such as those from the river plantations, used when they went a-visiting one another.

"There must be something in the wind," said Capt. Paul.

"You bet!" averred Alec, his eyes brightening at the prospect of excitement. "A lot o' niggers have run away, I reckon, an' the planters have come to get you to tell 'em what to do. Whenever anythin' goes wrong, up or down the river, it's Capt. Paul they look to."

The sight of the sloop, sweeping in toward the land- ing, caused the crowd to break up and scatter along the wharf, waving hats and kerchiefs.

Foremost of them all was the young planter's brave and efficient overseer, the Highlander, Duncan Macbean.

The Scotchman's dress was ordinary plantation garb, save as to his headgear, for he was topped with a High- land bonnet.

He waved the bonnet and shouted a cheery greeting.

His words were taken up by others in the crowd.

"Here's Capt. Paul back again!"

"Bravo, Capt. Paul! Sure, he couldn't have come at a more opporchune time."

"It's glad we are to see ye back, lad!"

"Huzza for the captain! Huzza!"

There was no room, just then, for the sloop at her usual moorings, so the young captain had sail taken in

and anchor dropped a cable's length off the landing; then the gig was lowered away, and he got into it with Alec, Cato and Scip, and was quickly ashore.

Old Duncan grabbed his hand fervently as he sprang from the boat, his honest, weather-beaten face aglow with happiness.

"Losh, man!" cried Duncan, "it's gude to press your hand again! We've heard o' your luck, but fine I knew ye'd succeed when ye left the plantation."

"What's the matter here, Duncan?" inquired the young planter, curiously. "Why have so many of my neighbors come together in this fashion?"

"Hoot, lad, there's rare mischief afoot. Come up by the warehouse and ye'll learn it all sune enough, I promise ye."

The next moment the youth was fairly surrounded by some of the crowd and almost carried to the vicinity of the warehouse, where the rest of the throng was waiting.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### THE YOUNG PLANTER'S DEFIANCE.

In the crowd were Bob Tichenor, from across the river; Nathan Kaggs, Samuel Swallow, James Ludwell and Morris Stringham from up the stream, and Messrs. Hapwell, Bruton, and brave Terence O'Malley, from below; there were others, also, from the country to the south.

Although, at this time, Capt. Paul had been less than two years in Virginia, yet he made friends easily, and was popular with all the planters in the vicinity of the Rappahannock.

He was a dashing young spark, loved his adopted country with all his heart and soul, and was ready, at all times, with his sword or his fists to avenge a personal affront or give aid to a friend.

Among the planters there were king's men as well as patriots, but enmity between the two factions was not yet so open and bitter as at a later period.

Paul Jones was a red-hot Whig, and was proud of it.

Not only did he proclaim just what he was, so there could be no possible doubt on the subject, but he made no secret of his affiliations with Washington, Henry, and the rest of the patriot clique.

Samuel Swallow, from up the river, was the most inveterate Tory of any of the king's men that day assembled at Capt. Paul's plantation.

Master Swallow was as round as a rum cask, had very red face and a much redder nose, wore a ten-pipe wig, dressed in cherry-colored silk, gave the latest cut to his hat, and strutted as he walked.

He was cordially disliked even by the Tories. Whenever there was anything of importance going forward, always tried to make himself the leader.

He sat on a bench by the warehouse taking snuff in a gold box as the young captain drew near, surrounded by O'Malley, Ludwell and a few of the younger set.

Snapping shut the lid of the snuffbox, Master Swallow floundered to his feet and leaned heavily on his cane.

"An' it please you, Capt. Jones," he puffed, "we, ye neighbors, have assembled here this morning to take counsel concerning a number of outrages that have been perpetrated on our plantations."

Master Swallow waved his right hand pompously, and thrust it into his ruffled bosom.

A laugh went up from O'Malley and others.

Young Alec Gilpin was standing behind Master Swallow, his nose in the air, leaning on a stick, which he held in his left hand, and his other hand thrust gracefully in the breast of his leather jacket.

Every move made by the fat Tory was perfectly mimicked by Alec; even the coonskin cap which the boy wore was cocked over his left eye.

The effect was ridiculous, to say the least.

Failing to grasp the cause of the laughter, Master Swallow glared indignantly.

"This, gentlemen," he cried, pounding the ground with his cane, "is no time for levity! I am astonished that you should treat the matter in that way. We must meet the issue courageously—courageously, I repeat, or the organized band of robbers will leave us without home and home."

He withdrew his hand from among the ruffles and stroked his chin.

Alec had also thumped the earth with his stick, raised his eyebrows and began stroking his chin.

The boy's face was gravity itself, and the laughter increased.

Master Swallow's wrath continued to rise.

All at once he glanced around and saw Alec.

"You—you little imp of the archfiend!" puffed Swallow. "How dare you, you young scalawag, make sport of your betters? I'll cane ye, by gad!"

Flourishing his cane, the Tory started for Alec, but

glected to take account of the bench that was between n and the boy.

Stumbling over the bench, Master Swallow went down a heap, his fat legs thrashing the air.

In some way he got on his back, and was as helpless that position as a turtle.

"Faith," laughed O'Malley, "these king's men are le good when ye have their backs to our good Virginia soil. Steady away, Master Swallow! Don't be so e with your cane, but give us your hand."

Capt. Paul and O'Malley, taking the fat gentleman's nd on either side, lifted him to his feet.

Ludwell picked up the three-corned hat and placed it the big wig.

"Gad!" fumed Swallow, his face purple with rage, "I in't come here to be insulted."

"Alec," said Capt. Paul, repressing his merriment with ficulty and trying to be stern, "you should pay more pect to Master Swallow. Beg his pardon, lad, for ur apish tricks!"

Alec was all humility as he came closer to the Tory.

"Forgive me, sir," said he. "I was but trying to learn ur polished manner, which is the talk of all Virginia. I give my eyeteeth, sir, an' I was as courtly and grace- ."

Swallow was as proud as a peacock. He wanted to considered the Beau Brummel of the Colony, and was ft enough to take Alec's flattery in sober earnest.

"Ha!" he cried, casting a look at the planters about em, "even the young are quick to appreciate the courtly faces!" Then, placing a fat hand on Alec's head, he ent on: "Ye do well, lad, to imitate those who, by tural study and aptitude, have made themselves the ass of fashion and the mold of form."

O'Malley snickered behind his hand, and all the others ad to turn their heads to hide their smiles or their dis- ist.

Alex continued to be meek and humble. Reaching into s breeches pocket he brought out an old horn snuffbox,

"Allow me, sir!" he said, presenting the box to Swal- w with a flourish and a bow.

"Bravo!" cried Swallow. "But you can improve on at, lad. Try it once more—like this."

And Swallow pulled out his own box, swept it through e air, and bowed with his hat against his ruffles.

Alec copied the maneuver, and Master Swallow gra-

ciously accepted the old horn box and took a liberal pinch of its contents in each nostril.

Then Alec, with astonishing alacrity, started for the woods.

"Pepper!" he yelled, between bursts of impish laughter. The Tory fairly bellowed in his wrath.

With all his might he hurled the horn box after the prankish lad, then fell to sneezing and coughing until the tears rolled down his cheeks, his hat flew off, his wig came awry and he tumbled back on the bench.

"I'll—I'll"—sneeze—"have that"—sneeze—"young ne'er-do-well at the"—sneeze, sneeze—"whipping-post for this!"

When he recovered a little, he got on his feet and sneezed out a call for his blacks.

When they came, he sneezed himself down to the land- ing, sneezed himself into the boat, and went sneezing up the river.

"Fiend take me," said O'Malley, leaning against the warehouse and laughing till he cried, "our Tory friend has sneezed more in the last five minutes than he has in a whole twelvemonth back!"

When the planters had somewhat recovered from their mirth, Capt. Paul asked to know the purpose of the meeting.

"Our plantations are being harried by a gang of rob- bers, Capt. Paul," said Morris Stringham. "Everyone here has suffered, more or less. Plate and money have been stolen from my house."

"A hogshead of winter-cured was taken from my ware- house," spoke up James Ludwell, "and one of my blacks, who heard the marauders and tried to stop them, was shot and killed."

"And I," said Bruton, "found a writing pinned to my door saying that if I did not leave a hundred gold guineas at the foot of the Black Rock on St. Swithin's Day, one of my tobacco houses would be fired. And if the money was not left at the rock on the day following, the other house would be burned."

"Did you leave the money, Master Bruton?" inquired Capt. Paul.

"Not on the first call."

"And one of your tobacco houses was burned?"

"Ay, to the ground. Next day I left the money, and t'other house was spared."

"I, also, have lost tobacco," reported Hapwell, "as well as Indian corn."

"And, by the same token," put in O'Malley, "the blackguards raided my place and took away a pair of fine flintlocks and a supply of powder and ball."

All had had their say save Duncan Macbean. Capt. Paul looked at him.

"Hoith, captain," said Duncan, "we've lost nothing as yet, but yesterday morning, as I came frae the house, I found this arrow athwart the step."

An Indian arrow, crosswise of the threshold, meant war.

Capt. Paul took the arrow, as the overseer handed it over, and snapped it in half.

"And on the house door," proceeded Duncan, taking a folded paper from the crown of his bonnet, "I found this."

Capt. Paul read the paper.

"Capt. Paul Jones will leave five hundred golden guineas at the Black Rock on Tuesday night, or his warehouse will be burnt; an' he leaves not the guineas the day following, his grist mill follows the warehouse.

(Signed) "OLD TRUEPENNY TYBURN."

Every eye was on the young planter.

With a disdainful laugh he tore the note in pieces, and cast the pieces to the winds.

"What answer, captain?" asked Duncan, surveying the other planters with a proud smile on his grizzled face.

"Go to the slave quarters, Duncan," said Capt. Paul, "and find me a rattlesnake skin. Bring with it a horn of powder and a bullet pouch."

The work was quickly performed; then Capt. Paul pushed the broken arrow into the snakeskin and packed it round with powder and ball.

"There, Duncan," said he, handing the stuffed snakeskin to the overseer, "when Old Truepenny comes to the Black Rock to-night hunting his golden guineas, let him find that."

Duncan Macbean was never prouder of the young planter than he was at that moment.

"Old Truepenny has a man o' parts to deal wi' now, ye ken!" he exclaimed, broadly, to the planters.

"Zooks, lad!" cried Bruton, "ye'll lose your warehouse and mill, e'en as I lost my tobacco house."

"Let Ole Truepenny try his tricks here," answered Capt. Paul, "and he'll have an ounce ball in his robber's heart! Tell me, has nothing been done to bring these thieves to book?"

"Much, captain," said O'Malley; "but to no avail.

Sure, we've followed their trail with the dogs, but trail vanishes into the water and the dogs are at sea."

"Neighbors," said Capt. Paul, "this work is to my ing. Since I am sending Old Truepenny my defiance, is fair to suppose that my plantation will be his field operations for the next few days, so the rest of you feel secure.

"I give you my promise that I will lay him and his throat crew by the heels and rid the Rappahannock them for all time."

"Will ye need help, my lad?" asked Terence O'Malk  
"An' I do," replied Capt. Paul. "I have Duncan, an' he is a host in himself."

Cæsar approached at that moment.

"Marse Cap'n," said he, "dere's a coach at de do o' de mansion an' a lady askin' for Marse Paul. She she 'bliged tuh stop, case her mammy done took sick de way."

Capt. Paul excused himself to the planters and started for the house. The planters, having finished their business that brought them together, took to their beds and departed for their estates.

## CHAPTER V.

### MIDNIGHT PROWLERS.

A chariot, drawn by two white horses, was at the side of the house overlooking the highroad.

The black driver was on the ground, at the head of the horses, evidently waiting for the master of the mansion to appear.

Doleful moans were coming from inside the chariot and Capt. Paul, hat under his arm, stepped to the open door.

The young planter, because of his dashing manner, ready courage and courtly bearing, was equally popular among the lasses of Tidewater Virginia as among the lads.

Within the chariot were two ladies, one young and dressed in dimity, her slippers giving a glimpse of neat turned ankles in silken hose, beautifully clocked with fancy designs.

On her right cheek was a black patch cut in form of a crescent. Such patches were much worn by ladies the day, but this, it seemed to the young planter, was overlarge.

This young lady was as beautiful as any the young captain had met in the Colonies.

Her companion was middle-aged, and in brocade.

She was being supported by the younger woman, who, at the same time, was using a small phial of smelling salts.

"At your service, ladies," said Capt. Paul, with a low bow.

"Sir," returned the younger woman, "I am Miss Betsy Cronin, of Williamsburg, and this is my mother. We are on our way to Samuel Swallow's plantation, beyond the river, but mother has been taken ill with megrims and we cannot travel further to-day. If we could find some refuge until to-morrow——"

"My house, madame, is at your service. There are no women folk about the place, but I assure you you will be safe in the home of Capt. Paul Jones as in your own place at Williamsburg."

The "megrims" was a fashionable complaint of the day, and in these times would be referred to as a headache.

If the chariot was bound for Master Swallow's, beyond the river, it was somewhat out of its course, as it could have taken a road several miles to the west and crossed the Rappahannock at Gilpin's Ferry.

The young planter made no comment on this point, but called Cæsar to take the hand bags, and Cato to help the black coachman put up the horses, and then supported Madame Cronin into the house and upstairs to the best chamber.

Mistress Betsy followed; and when they were safe in their room, Capt. Paul ordered his old housekeeper to attend to their wants.

Duncan Macbean was in the great living room when Capt. Paul entered it, after seeing to the comfort of his guests.

"Two ladies are to be with us overnight," said the young planter. "They are the Cronins, of Williamsburg, mother and daughter, and are bound for Master Swallow's."

"Tories!" growled Duncan Macbean.

He had fought with the redcoats under Braddock, and had been in at Braddock's defeat when, but for Washington, every redcoat and provincial would have bit the dust.

Washington had been despised by the regular Britishers, and his advice had not been taken.

Macbean could not forget this, and he hated a Tory as

much as he did a Lowlander—which is saying a good deal.

"Why," he demanded, "are they near this plantation if they are bound for Samuel Swallow's?"

"'Twere impolite to inquire, Duncan," smiled Capt. Paul. "They are here for the night, and are to be well cared for. The elder lady is ill, but to-morrow they will go on to Master Swallow's."

Stepping to the great fireplace, the young planter ran his fingers over the front of the blue tiles.

Suddenly the fingers paused, pressed upon a certain spot, and the face of one of the tiles swung noiselessly outward, revealing a small aperture behind it.

"You know of this place, Duncan," said Capt. Paul. "Many a time I have stored valuable papers in this place. Look!"

The youth drew the little ebony box from his breast and held it up for the Highlander's inspection.

"I see, lad," said the overseer.

"This is to be guarded with your life, if necessary, Duncan," went on Capt. Paul, placing the box in the hiding place and pushing the tile shut. "It is——"

The overseer sprang up hastily, approached a hall door with catlike softness and flung it quickly open.

After looking about the hall for a space, he reclosed the door and came back to his young master's side.

"What is it?" queried the youth.

"I thought I heard a noise," replied Duncan.

"There is no one in the house save you and I, the housekeeper and the two ladies above stairs."

"Natheless I thought I heard some one at the door," insisted Duncan.

"But you did not?"

"I saw no one, lad. But the box. Ye say it is to be guarded? We must be watchfu' concernin' it?"

"Ay! for the good of the Colonies, Duncan. You are as much a patriot as I am. If these thieves, who are prowling about the plantations, should come upon us, do you guard the fireplace and leave me to attend to the marauders."

"Ay, lad, that I will."

"And if anything should happen to me, that box is to be given over to the man who calls for it with a letter from Mr. Adams; an' he be the right man, he will have a key to fit the box, which you will have him open before you."

"Should evil befall ye, I'll haud fast to the box till the

right man comes, but ye are no in much danger from these night prowlers, I'm thinkin'."

"Still," said Paul, "'tis best to be on the safe side. Have you had my defiance taken to Old Truepenny?"

"It has gone to the Black Rock; Scip took it."

"Alec has some powder aboard the sloop. Let him have the barge, with Cato and enough blacks to man it, to take the powder upriver to his father, at the ferry."

"Ay, sir."

"And post guards at the warehouse, night and day. I hope Old Truepenny and his rascals will come. An' they do, Duncan; I can pick up their trail with the dogs."

"I will take care to guard against fire, captain."

Duncan left soon after receiving his instructions, and the young planter, filling the bowl of a "churchwarden" from a jar of tobacco on a table, settled himself by a window to smoke and reflect.

While he was never happier than when actively engaged in some such work as trailing down this band of freebooters, he liked it little that such work should come upon him at the very time he was taking care of the ebony box.

But with the active aid of brave old Duncan he had little doubt of his ability to acquit himself well of both duties.

He hoped, as he sat there smoking, that Mistress Betsy Cronin would favor him with a glimpse of herself and a brief chat; but she did not.

Instead, the housekeeper came to announce that Dame Cronin was still too ill to leave her chamber, or allow her daughter to leave. If it pleased the master of the house, they would like their meals in their room.

The young captain gave orders in accordance with this request.

The afternoon he spent on horseback, riding over the estate with the overseer.

The ladies sent down another excuse, and their evening meal, like their dinner, was sent up to them.

Duncan had made some attempt at quizzing the black who had driven the chariot to the door, but the slave might as well have been deaf and dumb so far as anything could be learned of him.

Following supper, Duncan was posted in the living room.

A couch covered with deerskins was to be his bed for the night, and there was a tankard of bombo for his use set out on the table.

The overseer, as the saying is, slept always with eye open. The slightest noise would waken him out of sound slumber.

As for the young planter, he went to the warehouse where Scip and Cato were watching.

These black boys were particular favorites with the master because of their courage and faithfulness.

They were armed with firelocks, and, in addition, had cutlasses at their sides.

The sloop had been moored at her old berth, against the landing and opposite the warehouse.

Capt. Paul sprang to her silent deck and groped his way down the companion and into the after cabin.

Life ashore was never much to his mind; what he loved was a heaving deck under his feet, and but for the sloop, which had come to him with the plantation, could hardly have contented himself on his estate.

In the cabin, he was close enough to the warehouse to be of assistance if needed, and, without striking a light he stretched himself out in his berth, sword and pistols within easy reach.

Dozing in a half slumber, he did not know how many minutes or hours had passed when, abruptly, he started to a sitting posture in his bunk.

A noise as of a boat rubbing against the sloop's side had reached his ears.

This was followed by shuffling, catlike steps on the deck overhead; and then, a moment later, the sloop seemed to be in motion—the lap of bilge water indicating that such was the case.

Noiselessly as he could, Capt. Paul got out of the berth, buckled on his sword, grasped his pistols and started up the companion way.

On the deck, near the companion, a man was standing.

Looking past him, the young planter saw that the sloop was indeed in motion, heading toward the middle of the river, noiselessly leaving the warehouse astern.

Scip and Cato, expecting trouble from the landward side of the warehouse, were there.

If they had not been taken care of by the thieves which hardly seemed likely, for that could not have been done without scuffling and an alarm—the sloop was being stolen right out from under their noses.

Stepping with catlike softness to the deck, Capt. Paul saw that a tow line had been passed to a rowboat. The sloop's cables had been cut, and she was being towed away into the darkness.

The man who had come aboard from the river side, and had severed the cables, turned.

Had he seen a ghost he could not have shown greater consternation than when his eyes encountered the young lantern.

Without allowing him a moment's time to shout an alarm, Capt. Paul's right fist shot out with the force of a battering-ram.

The fellow staggered and dropped senseless to the deck.

The youth thereupon ran forward, fired at the men in the rowboat, dropped his pistols and cut the tow line with his sword.

Apparently both Capt. Paul's shots were effective, for two of the dark figures in the smaller craft sank from sight under the gunwales.

While the daring youth bent over the tow line, a rifle cracked, and his hat was turned half around on his head by a bullet.

Back at the landing Cato and Scip came rushing from the opposite side of the warehouse; and there was a turmoil at the quarters, proving that the slaves were aroused.

Dogs began barking, and an excited din took the place of the recent silence.

"De sloop!" yelled Cato; "she's done gwine off into de ibber!"

"Somebody's done stealin' de sloop!" echoed the frantic scip.

"Dere's some un aboa'd de sloop!" and the two black boys had their guns leveled at Capt. Paul in a twinkling.

"Steady, there, boys!" shouted Capt. Paul. "The sloop was in tow of a small boat. Run along the bank and see if you can pick off some of the rascals in the boat; don't let them get ashore."

The blacks started away, and, at about that time, the young planter heard a splash.

Hastening to the spot where he had felled the man a moment before, he found that the fellow had recovered his wits and vanished—undoubtedly taking to the water.

Although Capt. Paul looked for him, he was not to be seen.

By then a large number of the blacks had reached the landing.

Capt. Paul hove a rope ashore, and the sloop was soon warped back to her moorings.

Springing to the wharf, the young planter asked for Duncan Macbean.

None of the negroes had seen him.

Knowing Macbean must have heard the noise, and that he would have shown himself if able to do so, the youth decided to make a hurried call at the house.

Bidding part of the blacks to watch the sloop, and the rest to hurry after Cato and Scip, and give them aid if any were needed, Capt. Paul dashed off in the direction of the mansion.

Curtains were drawn at the living-room windows; at the edges of the curtains, however, he saw lines of light.

The windows of the great chamber, above the living room, were dark.

Letting himself in at the great entrance door, Paul Jones crept along the hall to the door of the living room.

It stood a little ajar, giving him a glimpse of the interior.

The young woman, Betsy Cronin, was there.

She was dressed as when she had got out of the carriage, with the exception of her hat.

Carrying a lighted candle, she stood before the fireplace carefully examining the tiles.

For a brief space the young planter was astounded.

Duncan Macbean was not far wrong when he thought he had overheard some one at the door at the time Paul had opened the secret cupboard and placed the ebony box within it.

This young woman, a self-confessed Tory, was there to obtain the papers intrusted to Paul Jones' care!

A suspicion flashed through the young planter's mind; almost at the selfsame moment the suspicion was verified.

The girl slightly turned her face.

The black patch had disappeared from the right cheek, and there, just as described by the landlord of the cross-roads ordinary, was the small red scar in the shape of an "S."

This woman, then, and the woman who had fought for the papers on the Williamsburg road, were one and the same!

Paul Jones' eyes hardened like jade.

Where was Duncan Macbean? He swept his eyes about the room, but was unable to see any trace of the overseer.

Another instant and he had leaped into the apartment.

"For what are you looking, may I ask?" he inquired, dryly. "My guest, I should think, ought to be attending her afflicted parent instead of roaming my premises at this hour."

A little cry escaped the woman and she flung back, dropping the candle, and one hand darting toward her bosom.

The candle sputtered out harmlessly on the fireplace hearth.

Other candles blazed in the room, lighting it brightly.

Betsy Cronin's eyes blazed fiercely, and she drew from her bosom a jeweled dagger.

"Those papers are concealed here!" she cried, shrilly. "I will have them now, traitor! You shall not escape me this time, Paul Jones!"

Then she rushed at him like a wild cat.

## CHAPTER VI.

### AT CLOSE QUARTERS.

So befouled with contrary winds had been the sloop, on her trip from the York to the Rappahannock, that it was no difficult matter for the young woman to travel at speed 'cross country and reach Paul Jones' plantation at about the same time he did.

At some point the coach and four had been exchanged for the chariot and the other two horses.

Determined as this beautiful young vixen certainly was, her first thought, after the young planter had escaped with his papers, would be to make another play in the young planter's home.

Again, she had approached the youth on the side of his chivalrous nature; but had Paul Jones seen that scar on her cheek, or been able to recognize her in any other way, he would not have stumbled into this second trap.

The raging girl, having come within arm's length of him, made a sweeping lunge with the dagger.

With inconceivable quickness the young captain caught her white, slender wrist in a grip of steel.

A cry of pain was emitted from the woman's beautiful lips, and the dagger fell to the polished floor.

Pushing her from him, Capt. Paul picked up the dagger.

"It ill becomes me to use force against a woman," said he, tossing the dagger into a far corner, back of the couch, "but when a woman twice attempts my life, I have nothing else for it."

Steps were heard outside, and the other woman appeared in the door, wringing her hands.

"Betsy, Betsy, it is as I feared!" wailed the elder woman. "You have failed, and now——"

"I have not failed!" cried the girl, as a dripping ma pushed past her mother into the room.

The man was bareheaded, and water dripped from his swarthy face. He was fair drenched, and, as he walked his feet ground in his soggy jack boots.

"Ho!" cried Capt. Paul, a light breaking over his "was it you, Skipper Cockle, whom I felled to the deck of my sloop?"

"Ay, dash me!" growled Cockle; "and it was I, the seven holy spritsails, from whom you escaped, in the coach on the Williamsburg road. But this time——"

The scoundrel did not finish, but leaped to the fireplace.

Above the mantel were two crossed swords. Cockle jerked one of these from its fastenings, swung around in front of Capt. Paul, and stood at guard.

His eyes gleamed like those of an enraged panther.

Capt. Paul had his pistols, but they had been used, and he had not taken time to reload them.

He was beginning to see through this pretty plot more and more clearly.

It must have been a strange and vital matter that could bring such Tories as the Cronins hand-and-glove with such spawn as Skipper Cockle.

"Front to front at last!" breathed Cockle. "Split me fore an' aft if I don't settle our old account by running ye through!"

"Try it an' welcome," smiled Capt. Paul, whipping out his blade.

"Stand back, mistress!" said Cockle, in warning voice to Betsy Cronin. "Give us room and keep yourself and the dame beyond the circle of our swords. King George will have one rebel the less to fight before we are done. Hast got the papers?"

"Nay," answered the girl, seizing her mother and pressing back, "but I know where they are! Gain the mastery of Capt. Jones, friend Cockle, and we shall very soon have the papers! Hast secured the sloop so that we may sail in her?"

Cockle started an oath, but bit the words short.

"The sloop cannot be taken! An' we fly, it must be in the chariot."

"Guard!" cried Capt. Paul, and leaped at the man.

With a moan, Dame Cronin sank down in a chair and buried her face in her hands. Her daughter was not squeamish, but stood erect, watching the combat with steady eyes.



With the sword, Capt. Paul had no superior in the Colonies. He was lighter on his feet, had a truer hand and a quicker eye than Cockle, and knew that he could best him.

Besides, he had but to raise his voice and his slaves would come.

Cockle, knowing Capt. Paul's love of fair play, felt sure he would not do this.

The skipper's aim was to slay his antagonist and then slip away from the mansion before the deed was discovered.

It was desperate, but Cockle had taken desperate chances all his life long.

The swords circled like strips of fire in the candlelight, and the musical clash of steel against steel echoed through the room.

Cockle's inferiority was apparent from the very first, and the girl, suddenly throwing a footstool, endeavored to trip his adversary and place him at the skipper's mercy.

"Another attempt like that," said Capt. Paul, "and I will call my blacks. I am giving this blackguard a fair show for his skill, but you may tempt me to do otherwise."

The girl drew back, pallid and breathless.

Step by step Capt. Paul forced Cockle backward around the room, playing with him as a cat might play with a mouse.

The skipper panted and swore, lunging madly and leaving his breast unguarded a score of times.

Suddenly he tripped against the couch, pushed it backward and its covering of deerskins revealed the form of Duncan Macbean, lying at full length on the floor.

The unexpected sight so unnerved Capt. Paul that a quick lunge on the part of Cockle rent his coat and came within an inch of piercing his breast.

The girl clapped her hands.

"Another like that, friend Cockle! Another!"

A fair fiend she was, or else her zeal in the interest of the king had robbed her of every womanly feeling.

Capt. Paul, enraged at the sight of Duncan Macbean's silent form, was all for passing his blade through the murderous skipper's heart.

He pressed the skipper harder and harder, and finally had him against the wall.

Just then swift steps echoed from the hall, and a door opened at the young planter's back.

He did not look around, not daring to take his eyes from the vengeful Cockle in such a critical moment.

"Capture the women, lads!" he shouted, thinking the newcomers must be his blacks; "leave this rascal to me——"

Before he could finish a fierce blow was dealt from behind.

Capt. Paul dropped his sword, threw up his hands and staggered back.

Half dazed, he saw a man with a bandaged head standing before him; and simultaneously he heard his negroes hastening toward the house outside.

Again the man-o'-war's man used his flinty fist, and Paul Jones fell backward across the cot.

## CHAPTER VII.

### PURSUIT.

When Capt. Paul regained his wits, his aged house-keeper was in the room directing the negroes who were laboring to resuscitate him.

French brandy had been forced between his lips and water dashed in his face.

He sat up on the cot, stunned and bewildered, trying to remember what had taken place.

"Is yo' all right, Marse Cap'n?"

"Does yo' feel better, Marse Paul?"

Paul Jones, like his brother, William, before him, was a kind and considerate master.

He was almost worshiped by his slaves, several of whom he had manumitted in recognition of some brave act.

Presently he started up, poured himself another draught of brandy and tossed it off.

"Where are those who were in this room when you came?" he asked of Cato.

"Der wasn't no one heah, Marse Cap'n," replied Cato; "jess you and Marse Duncan, on de flo' dere."

"Run to the barn, Cato, and see if the chariot that brought the visitors to the mansion is still here," said the young planter, feverishly energetic as a full realization of events returned to him. "Scip," he added, "run upstairs and see if those two ladies are in their room."

The two black boys hurried out of the room, and their master sank on his knees beside Duncan Macbean.

To his surprise, there was no wound upon the overseer's body.

He was breathing heavily, and was more like a man in a trance than in a natural sleep.

His breath carried an odor that caused the youth to start and give vent to a muttered exclamation.

"Lift him to the couch," he ordered, and arose and went to the table.

Lifting the goblet that stood near the tankard, he smelled of it and detected the same odor that hung so heavily on the overseer's breath.

"Drugged!" he muttered.

It was the young woman who had done this; it could have been no other.

In some way she had succeeded in slipping a sleeping potion into the overseer's liquor, and he had drained the goblet without suspecting.

When drowsiness overtook him, the girl had entered the room, dragged his form to the couch and concealed it, and then had taken the candle and begun her examination of the tiles.

As he thought of the tiles and the ebony box, Capt. Paul's eyes sought the fireplace.

Another surprise was in store for him.

*The tile that covered the secret compartment swung open!*

With a cry of dismay he leaped to the fireplace and thrust his hand into the aperture.

The box was gone!

Overcome by the discovery, the young planter dropped limply into a chair.

The trust reposed in him by Col. Washington, Patrick Henry and his good friend, Mr. Hewes, had been misplaced!

The papers were gone, and the Tories, through this desperate and determined young woman, had dealt a telling blow at their enemies, the patriots.

The same spirit that cropped out in Capt. Paul when, later, he stood on his battered and sinking ship and called out: "We have just begun to fight!" froze in him then.

Quickly he had marshaled his wits and was on his feet once more.

"Cæsar," said he, "you and Juba will take the skiff and cross the river after Bob Tichenor. Bring him at once and have him do what he can for Duncan."

As the negroes went out, Cato came in from the barn.

"De charyut is gone, Marse Cap'n," he reported, "an' dat strange niggah is gone wif it."

On the heels of this came Scip with the announcement:

"Dem ladies ain't upstairs no mo', Marse Cap'n; dey clean gone."

"Get my riding horse, Neb," Capt. Paul ordered. "Bring a torch with you and hold the horse till I come." He turned to Scip and Cato again.

"Load my pistols, Cato," he went on, handing the weapons to the black. "Now, Scip," he ordered, when Cato had left, "didn't you and Cato hear those rascals when they came and made fast to the sloop?"

"We didn't heah a sound, Marse Cap'n," protested Scip; "fust thing we heah was de shootin'."

"What about the men in the boat?"

"We kep' 'em from landin', sah. Dey pulled off up river. When dey was gone, we sta'ted to look fo' yo'. Couldn't see yo' nowhere, so we come to de house. I front do' was wide open, an' when we reached dishyer room, Marse Duncan was on de flo' an' you was er lyin' 'crost de couch. Dar wasn't no one else heah."

"You didn't hear anyone running, or hear the chariot drive away?"

"No, Marse Cap'n."

Cato came back with the loaded revolvers.

Capt. Paul took his naked sword from the table, where one of the negroes had laid it, and slipped it into the scabbard.

Then he took his pistols from Cato and thrust them into his sword belt.

Picking up his spurs from the mantel, he buckled them to his heels.

"Scip," he went on, when ready to start, "you and Cato will take half a dozen of the other boys with you and go to the sloop. Stay right with her and watch her until further orders."

"Is yo' goin' alone aftah dat charyut, Marse Cap'n?" inquired Scip.

"Certainly."

"Kain't ye take me 'long, Marse Cap'n? 'Tain't right fo' you to go alone, sah!"

"Do as I tell you!" answered Capt. Paul, and hurried from the house.

Down by the horse-block stood Neb with the horse and the torch.

Taking the torch out of the black's hand, the young planter held it low and swept it back and forth across the road.

Neb was wise in all the arts of tracking runaway aves; he could follow a trail like a bloodhound, and every twig, leaf and blade of grass along the course told its own story of the feet that had passed over it.

"Look, Neb!" Capt. Paul said, indicating the road. "What do you see there?"

"Dere's prints ob horses an' a kerridge goin' east, Marse ap'n," answered Neb, sagaciously, "an' prints ob de same horses an' kerridge goin' west."

"The prints pointing west were made after those going the other way?"

"Yass, sah; dat's whut I makes out."

"That is what I make out, too."

Capt. Paul leaped to the saddle, his spurs rattled and he was off at speed, pointing due west.

Old Truepenny Tyburn, it now seemed very certain, as assisting Skipper Cockle.

Old Truepenny and his bandits were to steal the sloop and have her ready for Dame Cronin and her daughter, and the skipper and man-o'-war's man when they had secured the papers and were ready for flight.

Capt. Paul's prompt and resolute work had prevented the carrying out of that part of the plan.

The women and their helpers had perforce to fall back on the chariot, which Capt. Paul was pursuing at top speed.

Capt. Paul would have given much to know how Cockle and Old Truepenny had been able to unite their forces so opportunely.

But the business that concerned Capt. Paul at that time was the overhauling of the chariot and the recovery of the ebony box.

For well-nigh an hour he rode, goading his horse to the utmost. At the end of that time he heard the rattle of a vehicle ahead.

He knew he was drawing close to his quarry, and was soon able to see chariot, horses and driver.

The driver was plying the lash and forcing the horses to their best pace. Presently Capt. Paul was abreast of the negro, covering him with a pistol.

"Stop!" he ordered; "stop at once or I'll shoot you off the seat!"

"Doan' shoot, marse, doan' shoot!" implored the negro.

In pursuing the chariot alone, the young captain was acting with his usual impetuosity.

As he believed, the two women were in the vehicle, and also Cockle and the man-o'-war's man.

Counting the black driver, he was one against three—one against four, if Betsy Cronin were counted.

As the chariot halted, Capt. Paul backed his horse about and faced the door, pistols in hand.

\* Not a sound came from the interior of the vehicle.

"Who's in the coach?" the young planter demanded.

"No one, marse," answered the driver.

"What!" exclaimed Capt. Paul. "Where are your mistress and her daughter?"

"I dunno, marse," answered the negro, vacantly.

Suspecting another trap, the young planter dismounted and cautiously opened the chariot door, holding one of his pistols in readiness for instant use.

Still no hostile move against him was made.

Getting into the vehicle, he found that the driver had told the truth, and that it was indeed empty.

"Where are your passengers?" he demanded, springing out.

"I dunno, marse," repeated the negro.

"You *do* know, you black rascal!" cried Capt. Paul, leveling one of his weapons. "Is your life worth anything? If it is, you will answer me at once, and tell the truth."

"You can kill me, marse," said the negro, "but I kain't tell yo' somethin' I doan' know."

After a moment's thought, Capt. Paul thrust the pistol back into his belt.

"Turn the chariot around," said he, curtly, "and drive back to the plantation."

The negro obeyed, but not with a very good grace, and together they returned to the place from whence they had started.

It was a silent and far from pleasant journey for either of them.

Dawn was breaking as they drew up in the road in front of the mansion.

Cæsar, Juba, Neb and several more of the watchful negroes witnessed their approach and hurried up from the quarters.

Capt. Paul told the blacks to put the horses back in the barn and to make a prisoner of the negro driver.

Then he went to the house.

Bob Tichenor, who had some skill in the practice of medicine, was there, doing what he could for Duncan Macbean.

Duncan was still unconscious.

"Some strange narcotic has been used," remarked

Tichenor, "and I am not able to say how long this state of coma will last. Macbean may recover in a few minutes, and it may be several hours. I have done all I can for him, and the only thing to do now is to wait until the drug has spent itself."

Tichenor put on his hat and took his box of phials and physic under his arm.

"You had trouble here last night, I am told," he went on, "but managed to beat off the invaders."

"Yes, Bob," Capt. Paul answered, "old Truepenny and his crew tried to steal my sloop, and we all had a braw time of it."

"How did this happen to Duncan, Jack? Surely Truepenny isn't waging his campaign with sleep powders!"

"What happened to Duncan is a mystery to me. I hope he will recover soon, so that I may know."

The young planter was quiet on the subject of the stolen papers. Tichenor was a good Whig and a good friend, but the fate of the papers Capt. Paul was determined to keep to himself.

Tichenor went away and Capt. Paul ate his breakfast. It was a gloomy breakfast, since brave old Duncan, who usually ate with him, was stretched on his back unconscious of all that took place.

Following the meal, Capt. Paul walked out into the sunshine.

"Scip," he called, "fetch me the strange negro. Have Juba come with you, and bring the cat."

The black was brought struggling to the scene, and held in front of the young planter.

Capt. Paul's brow was black as a thundercloud.

"I am positive you know where your mistress went," said he, "and that it was a part of your plan to make me lose time following the empty chariot while those I wanted were making their escape in another way."

"You must tell me what became of your mistress. If you do not tell me of your own free will, I shall flog you until you do."

"I dunno nuffin' 'bout it, marse," insisted the negro.

"Strip his back," ordered Capt. Paul, "and take him to the whipping-post."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### ALEC BRINGS NEWS.

The young planter was not in love with the whipping-post, and it was rarely brought into use on his plantation.

He could be stern enough when occasion demanded and so could Duncan, but they so ruled the blacks extreme measures were rarely called for.

From the other planters slaves were continually being away, but never from Capt. Paul.

In the present instance, Capt. Paul felt that he entirely justified.

So much hung on the recovery of the ebony box he would be lax in the duty he owed his country did not exhaust every means for apprehending those had stolen it.

The negro, Juba, was an immense fellow, and must like an ox.

When the Cronin slave was bound to the post, J cast aside his dowlas shirt, grasped the handle of the and stepped to the side of the black who was to receive punishment.

"Your name?" said Capt. Paul, placing himself in front of the Cronin negro, where he could watch his face.

"Hugon, marse."

"You are French?"

"*Oui*—from Guiana, marse."

"Will you tell what became of your mistress?"

"I dunno, marse."

Hugon's face had turned a sickly gray under its black skin. Capt. Paul raised his hand.

The cat swished through the air and fell on the negro's back. An ear-splitting yell came from Hugon.

"I don't want to punish you more than necessary," said Capt. Paul. "You have a chance to tell me where your mistress went, Hugon, and there will be no more flogging."

Hugon's face was writhing with pain, but still he gave his stereotyped answer:

"I dunno, marse."

Again Capt. Paul raised his hand, and again Juba lay on with the stinging thongs. Five times in quick succession the cat descended; and then, unable to stand the punishment longer, Hugon cried that he would yield.

Juba drew aside, holding the cat ready to use on more if it should be needed.

"Did your mistress and her daughter get into the chariot at all?" asked the young planter.

"Yass, marse; dey come from de house an' got into the charyut."

"How far did they ride?"

"Jess a li'l ways, marse; not mo' dan er mile."

"What became of them then?"

"Dey all got out——"

"Who do you mean by *all*?"

"Marse Cockle an' dat sailor man wif de bandaged  
aid. Dey was wif mah missis, marse."

"Where did they go?"

"Dey went to take a boat on de ribber."

"Where were they going then?"

"Up ribber some'rs. I dunno where, marse; hones'  
don't."

"You were driving that coach on the Williamsburg  
road?"

"Yass, marse."

"Where were you going that night?"

"We had be'n out to Marse Cronin's country place,  
I stopped at de tavern on de way back."

"Then the sailor came?"

"Dat's right, marse. De sailor man come, an' we  
a'ted; den we was stopped, den you rode up, an' so  
much happened I was clean flabbergasted so I couldn't  
membah nuffin'."

"What happened after the fight?"

"I was told to drive back to Marse Cronin's country  
place, where we got de charyut an' anodder team, an'  
come on heah."

"Was Cockle hurt during that fight we had in the  
back?"

Capt. Paul recalled that Mistress Betsy had used the  
revolver that time, and that Cockle had cried out as  
with the pain of a wound.

"Jess a li'l' hurt, marse," said Hugon; "in de side,  
but it doan' amount to nuffin'."

Capt. Paul had learned all that he cared to know.

The Cronins, Cockle and the man-o'-war's man had  
gone upriver, and he had no time to lose if he cherished  
any hopes of overhauling them.

He gave orders that Hugon was to be untied from the  
post, conveyed to the quarters and tenderly cared for;  
but he was to be kept a prisoner.

Neb was sent again for his master's riding horse, and  
the youth went again into the house for a final look at  
poor Duncan before leaving the plantation.

The overseer was lying just as he had been, not a  
flicker of returning consciousness showing in his immo-  
bile face.

With a sigh the young captain turned away, left the

house, swung into the saddle and spurred along the  
path that followed the river.

Never was the young planter's iron endurance better  
exemplified than in this series of exciting adventures.

He had had no rest during the preceding night saving  
the brief interval he had passed in his berth on the sloop,  
and for hours he had been actively engaged.

Notwithstanding this, his hardy nature leaped un-  
weariedly to meet what fate might have in store for  
him.

His nerves were steady, his faculties keen and he was  
in fine trim to do his best whenever he should be called  
upon.

As he rode upstream, he came presently to a stretch  
of sandy shore with a huge black boulder in the middle  
of it.

"The Black Rock!" he muttered, thinking of what had  
taken place at his plantation on the forenoon of the  
preceding day.

The empty rattlesnake skin lay over the face of the  
boulder, and to it was attached a bit of paper bearing  
these words:

"Old Truepenny presents his compliments to Capt. Paul  
Jones and wishes to state that he accepts the powder and  
ball as a loan, and will return them to Capt. Jones at the  
muzzle of a flintlock. Tidewater, Virginia, is not large  
enough for both Capt. Jones and old Truepenny Ty-  
burn."

A grim smile curled Capt. Paul's lip.

"Old Truepenny is a rare rogue," thought he, as he  
started on. "I faith I should like to meet him."

While the young planter was threading the thick woods  
a mile further, his quick ears caught a thud of galloping  
hoofs. Backing his mount into the undergrowth, the  
youth waited, one hand on the butt of a pistol.

The next moment an exclamation of surprise escaped  
him, for the approaching rider was none other than Alec  
Gilpin.

The lad was lying along his horse's neck, plying the  
gad and riding like mad.

"Alec!" called Capt. Paul.

"Hello!" returned Alec, straightening up and stopping  
his horse. "Who's there?"

The young planter rode out, and Alec's joy found vent  
in a loud "huzza!"

"Great Jemimy! Ye're jest the feller I was lookin'  
fer, Capt. Paul!"

"Why are you looking for me, my lad?"

"There was fightin' at your plantation last night, wasn't there?"

"Ay, rather a brisk set-to with the gang of robbers who are trying to rule the roost in this section. They made an attempt to steal the sloop, but it was frustrated."

"Do ye know where the gang has their headquarters, Capt. Paul?"

Alec's eyes were bright and his face showed considerable excitement.

"No," answered the young planter, eying the lad sharply. "Have you any information on that point, Alec?"

"Sure I have, Capt. Paul. Brother Han an' I went fishin' yesterday afternoon late, and while we was settin' on the river bank we seen some rough-lookin' fellers rowin' a boat an' towin' the queerest-lookin' craft that ever come inter these waters.

"It looked like a flatboat, but there was a cabin on it, an' a smokepipe comin' out o' the roof of the cabin. Han an' I hid an' saw the men tow the boat inter a creek, where it couldn't be seen from the river.

"The men got out o' the boat, an' I saw then that one o' them was that Skipper Cockle who made ye sò much trouble below Norfolk.

"Now that we got the *Roost* anchored," says one, 'jest come aboard, Cockle, an' we'll lay our plans fer ter-night. There's some prime grog aboard the *Roost*, an' I reckon ye ain't averse ter wettin' yer whistle, eh, old sea dog?"

"Then the lot o' them went inter the cabin on the flatboat, an' Han an' I lit out fer home."

"Why didn't you bring word to me about this before, Alec?" asked Capt. Paul.

"I was kinder mixed up like in my mind, an' didn't know what ter do. When a trader showed up from downriver this mornin', an' brought word o' the trouble at your plantation, I thinks o' the flatboat at once. 'I'll lay a straight course fer Capt. Paul,' says I ter myself, 'an' tell him about the *Roost*.'"

"Is the flatboat still in the creek?"

"She's there. I jest come from that way, an' I stopped long enough ter creep up on the *Roost* an' look through a cabin winder."

"Was there anyone in the cabin?"

"Three men, Capt. Paul, an' rough-lookin' chaps they are, too. They had weapons hanging from nails in the

wall an' was carryin' on as though they had been drinkin'. They was as sin, an' would jest as soon shoot a nigger as ter look at him."

Capt. Paul now understood why it was impossible the planters to follow the trail of the robbers with dogs.

When they fled, after committing their depredation it was by water, and they left no trail.

By moving the *Roost* about from place to place they were able to fend off discovery and continue their nefarious work.

"How far is that creek where the *Roost* is hove from here, Alec?"

"Not more'n two mile, Capt. Paul."

"Then point your horse the other way, lad. We're going there."

Alec gasped.

"Are we goin' alone, sir?"

"Why not? You said there were only three of t' rascals in this robbers' roost. It's a good time to raid t' place."

"It wouldn't take me long ter ride ter the ferry a git dad."

"I don't need dad! Turn your horse and lead t' way."

"That's jest' like Capt. Paul!" exulted Alec, whirlin' his horse about. "You'll tackle anythin' that comes yo' way, big or little. I druther sail with you than with a other man in shoe leather!"

The two miles were covered swiftly.

When within a bowshot of the creek, the two dismounted and tied their horses.

"Have you a weapon of any kind, Alec?" asked Capt. Paul.

"No, captain," replied the lad; "an' that's what's worryin' me. I can't do ye much good without somethin' to shoot with."

"Possibly you can be of aid—after a little."

Side by side they crept up to the brushy margin of the little stream, not far from the point where it enters the Rappahannock.

On hands and knees Capt. Paul parted the tangle thicket in front of him and peered out at the queer-lookin' craft that rubbed its side against the bank.

Alec had described it well.

It was nothing more or less than a flatboat with a rude cabin occupying the larger part of its deck.

From within the cabin came roaring voices, singing a nautical catch known as "Tom Bowling."

"Remain here, Alec," whispered Paul, "and do not stir until I call you. Here's an opportunity to nab three of this lawless brood, and I cannot let it slip."

"Have a care of yerself, Capt. Paul!" admonished the lad, as the young planter rose from the thicket, cautiously pushed his way through to the edge of the bank and boarded the flatboat.

## CHAPTER IX.

### CAPT. PAUL PLAYS TO WIN.

Capt. Paul's daring maneuver was executed with a care that kept any suspicion of it from the boisterous trio in the cabin.

Drawing his pistols from his belt and grasping one in each hand, he suddenly kicked open the door and entered the robbers' rendezvous.

There were three men there, just as Alec had said.

And they were gallows birds, every mother's son of them—as ripe for murder as for eating a meal or drinking a glass of grog.

Just then, however, they were taken at a disadvantage.

Not only were they somewhat under the influence of liquor, but their surprise was so intense as to be well-nigh ludicrous.

For a full minute they stared at Capt. Paul with jaws agape and bewilderment in their eyes.

Then, voicing wild oaths, they sprang up and reached up, as though they would snatch their weapons down from the wall.

"Pray do not trouble yourselves, gentlemen," said Jones; "you may be three against one, but the first to turn a weapon on me goes out of this world suddenly!"

The young captain brought his pistols to a level, covering the rascals before him.

There was a glint in his eyes that spoke volumes for his resolute purpose, and the trio of worthies exchanged apprehensive looks and sank back into their seats.

"Who might you be?" queried one, hoarsely.

"Capt. Paul Jones," was the airy reply. "You paid your respects to me last night, and I am now but returning the compliment. Flat on the floor, the three of you!"

"Hey?"

The unusual order startled the rogues. Capt. Paul re-

peated the command, accompanying it with a significant flourish of his pistols.

The three men dropped instanter, lying at full length on the cabin floor.

"Turn on your faces, hands behind you!" went on Capt. Paul.

The order was obeyed.

"Alec!" shouted the young planter; "this way, Alec!"

The lad was heard rending the brush in his haste to reach the boat; another moment and he sprang to the deck and ran in at the open door.

"Great Je-mi-my!" he cried, surveying the prostrate robbers. "Have ye killed 'em all, Capt. Paul? I didn't hear any shootin'."

"They're alive, right enough, Alec," answered Capt. Paul, "but they must be bound. Find ropes somewhere; there must be a supply of material in this vipers' nest."

Alec found some suitable cords in a locker, and with a dirk taken from one of the prisoners he cut the cords into lengths and made the hands of the robbers fast at their backs; then he performed the same duty at their ankles.

When this was finished, the young planter thrust his pistols back into his belt, turned the rogues on their backs and proceeded to twist more of the cord between the jaws of two of them—thus making effective gags.

The third man—whose appearance suggested that he was the most intelligent of the three—Capt. Paul reserved for cross-examination, holding another piece of cord ready for his gagging when the cross-examining was done.

"There are arms on the wall, Alec," said he; "take what you please and then do an anchor watch on the deck outside. I took these scoundrels by surprise, and we must not let their comrades treat us in similar fashion."

Alec, delighted with the chance to use the robbers' weapons, pushed four pistols into his breeches band, slipped two dirks into the breast of his linsey shirt and laid hold of a flintlock rifle. Thus armed to the teeth, he went forth from the cabin and performed sentinel duty on the after deck.

"The fortunes of war, gentlemen," said Capt. Paul, seating himself on one of the vacated stools. "There is a neat gibbet in Williamsburg, and you'd decorate it finely! Where's old Truepenny?"

"Don't know nothin' about sech a man," asserted the rogue who could talk.

"Have you so soon forgotten your leader? Refresh your memory a little. How about Skull-and-Crossbones Cockle? He's a fit mate for old Truepenny, and I suppose they're cruising together, eh?"

The young captain's knowledge seemed to astonish all three of the prisoners.

The two who were gagged mumbled behind their cords, while their comrade used his free tongue and swore heartily.

"Ye're the very devil, Paul Jones!"

"Thank you for your high opinion."

"How did ye find out old Truepenny was away with Cockle an' the man-o'-war's man?"

"When I play at picquet I never give away my hand to those who play against me."

"Ye're a rum un!"

"Did old Truepenny, Cockle and the man-o'-war's man bring the ladies to this roost of yours?"

"Mayhap. If ye know so much, ye ort ter know that, too. I'll tell ye how ye can find out what ye want ter know?"

"How?"

"Stay here long enough, my blood, an' old Truepenny, Cockle an' the man-o'-war's man'll come back. When they do, ye can ask 'em what ye want ter know."

The fellow grinned sardonically.

"Thank you for the suggestion," answered the daring Capt. Paul. "It's a good one, and, as I'm playing the cards to win, I believe I shall carry it out."

"Old Truepenny an' Cockle'll make a lead mine of ye, if ye do!"

"You're a little bit out of your reckoning when you say that."

Capt. Paul got up and stepped to the door.

"Alec," said he, "go back along the bridle path and tie the horses further off in the timber. When you return, come into the cabin."

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the lad, and at once leaped ashore.

The captured rogue had no idea that Capt. Paul was about to carry out his suggestion—which proved how little he knew the youth.

Impetuous in the extreme, the young planter had led, and was in future to lead, many a forlorn hope, wresting success from the very teeth of adversity.

A bold, even a reckless, policy ever appealed to him.

As a first step in his plans, he silenced the third man

with a gag as he had silenced the other two; then he unceremoniously rolled them under some bunks built against one of the walls.

In looking for ropes to bind the prisoners, Alec had delved into a locker containing rough clothing.

Capt. Paul had made mental note of this, at the time his wit suggesting the use to which the homely gear was now to be put.

Over his coat he drew a much-frayed shirt of buckskin, then covered his lower limbs with linsey breeches and leggins; about his middle he strapped his trusty sword, giving his pistols their wonted place under his belt.

His own hat he tucked away under the leather shirt, replacing it with an old beaver.

From a much-begrimed lanthorn pendent from the ceiling he secured a little candle-black, with which he smeared his face and hands.

It was a very much transformed Paul Jones resulting from these devices. His best friend would not have known him.

Having completed the change from Capt. Paul to freebooter, he awaited the return of Alec, resolved to test upon him the completeness of the change.

In a few minutes a crashing of the bushes on the creek bank informed the young planter that some one was approaching. Stepping to a window commanding that side of the little stream, he waited expectantly.

A form appeared directly, but it was not the form of Alec Gilpin.

A bandaged head showed above the thicket and was followed by the broad, tall figure of the man-o'-war's man.

Did he come alone, or were Cockle and old Truepenny in his wake?

Capt. Paul had no time to ascertain this. Even if the skipper and the leader of the band were with the man-o'-war's man, they were but three to one, and he had already got the better of such odds.

Seating himself on a stool, he waited.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE LAST OF THE "ROOST."

The man-o'-war's man came from the direction in which Alec had gone to attend to the horses.

Capt. Paul hoped in his heart that no harm had be-



fallen the lad, and felt sure there had not, for Alec was keen-witted and able to take care of himself.

The sailor scrambled to the deck of the *Roost* and entered the cabin.

At the sight of Capt. Paul, he seemed nonplused.

"Ahoy!" the sailor grunted, stopping short and staring at the disguised planter. "Are ye one o' the crew o' this raft?"

"I am," returned Capt. Paul.

"I disremember seein' ye among the lot," growled the other. "The cut o' yer jib is summ'at furrin."

"So's yourn, fer that matter. Dost know old Truepenny, my buck?"

"Ay, for a matter o' twenty-four hours or such like."

"I was away among the plantations lookin' fer fresh pickin's, so ye've joined while I was absent from the rendezvous. Sit down, mate, an' ye're one o' us. Bewike," added Capt. Paul, as by sudden thought, "ye're with Cockle an' Dame an' Mistress Cronin, workin' for old King George?"

"Ye have it right," replied the sailor.

"An' what name do ye sail under? Black Bart is what the lads call me."

"Rotherick is my name, Ben Rotherick, A. B. Barrin' a crack I got on the skull, I'm as able a seaman as ever."

"Help yerself to a noggin' o' rum," said Capt. Paul, generously, waving his hand toward the liquor on the table.

By then the young planter felt easier in his mind. It was a safe guess that Rotherick had come to the flat-boat alone.

The man-o'-war's man drained a full mug, dried his lips on his sleeve and settled back with a satisfied grin.

"Nothin' like drink to rest a man's nerves an' body," he commented. "Since I left Cockle, an' Truepenny, an' the women, I've been afoot. We ran afoul o' hard luck last night, an' cleared the breakers by the skin of our teeth."

"Ye got the sloop?"

Rotherick swore disgustedly.

"This Capt. Paul blocked the game! He's wuss'n the *Flyin' Dutchman* fer bein' on a dozen seas at the same time. I'm hopin' fate will lay me alongside o' him long enough to give me a chance to board. There'd be one traitor the less after that."

"Ye're not the only one who'd like to come to close quarters with Capt. Paul."

"Ay, mate, ye speak fair. But, harkye! It was Capt. Paul cracked my skull south o' Norfolk, an' all but scuttled Cockle an' sent him to the bottom.

"I had a chance at the planter last night. If his slaves hadn't come in the nick o' time I'd have settled old scores."

"But Mistress Cronin got what she was after, I hear. Do ye know what it was, mate?"

"Not I. Cockle does, mayhap. All I know, we rode in the kerridge several knots due west from the Jones' plantation, got out an' took to a boat.

"The women was landed across the river, at Sparrow's plantation; an' directly after Cockle spoke this old Truepenny o' yours, and we cruised in company till daylight; then I was landed on this side the river and told to regain the *Roost* and gather up a supply of powder and ball; old Truepenny was runnin' short.

"He, an' Cockle, and me is after Paul Jones, an' we don't leave these waters until we sink him. Burn me, if I don't think we've got the planter on the run."

Rotherick got up and stretched his huge limbs.

"This land cruisin' ain't to my likin', mate," he went on, "but the quicker I get the ammunition an' git back to the skipper an' old Truepenny, the sooner we'll be able to up anchor an' bear away."

He took the lanthorn from its swinging hook, set it on the table and reached for a tinder box on a nearby shelf.

While he worked at striking a light, he kept up his running fire of small talk.

"Old Truepenny lost some men last night. That makes him as hungry for this traitor captain's life as Cockle an' me."

Having lighted the lanthorn, Rotherick set it down on the floor beside a trap with an iron ring. Then he glanced around.

"There ought to be a hatchet some'rs," he muttered, and started to look under the row of bunks where the prisoners had been stowed.

"I think it's under the bunks on this side, mate," said Capt. Paul, quite calmly.

Discovery had hung by a hair. As it fell out, it was merely post-bound, and was to happen later.

By good luck, the hatchet was in the place Capt. Paul had indicated.

Possessing himself of it, Rotherick knelt beside the trap and pulled it open with the ring.

Reaching down into the shallow hold, he drew up a powder horn.

"Empty," he muttered, shaking the horn close to his ear. "I'll have ter smash in a cask o' powder. The hold's full o' the stuff. If the crew o' this craft ever git too free with their pipes, the lot of 'em'll sail skyward."

Capt. Paul, awaiting his opportunity, was watching Rotherick like a weasel.

As it happened, Rotherick knelt facing him, bending over and using the hatchet on a cask below.

Had the man-o'-war's man's back been to the young planter, a well-directed blow would have stunned the fellow and made his capture comparatively an easy matter.

But that, considering the circumstances, was out of the question.

The head of the cask was quickly smashed, revealing the black contents.

As Rotherick reached for the powder horn, one of the prisoners rolled from beneath the bunk and struggled to his knees before Capt. Paul had a chance to get at him.

The fellow had chewed at the cords until they had parted, and he was free to use his tongue.

"Look out, Rotherick!" he roared. "It's Capt. Jones ye're talkin' to!"

Rotherick leaped erect, glaring.

"So, ho!" he shouted, "it's the traitor himself, the——"

He was reaching for his dirk when the young planter grappled with him.

There was a terrific struggle back and forth across the cabin, each man seeking to draw a weapon and bring the battle to an end, the other preventing him.

At last, with an effort that called forth all his great strength, Capt. Paul tore away and struck Rotherick from him.

The sailor staggered backward, struck the lanthorn with his foot and toppled it through the trap.

From that moment it was a drawn battle.

Neither combatant thought of anything but getting clear of the *Roost* in the shortest possible time.

As he bounded past the man kneeling on the floor, the young planter lingered an instant to sever the cords that bound his feet, then raced on.

He gained the after deck, caught a glimpse of Rotherick and the robber behind him, and then——

A bluish flash puffed upward from the hold, and a thunderous explosion followed.

## CHAPTER XI.

### AT MASTER GILPIN'S.

The young planter, dazed and bewildered, found himself, a few minutes after the explosion, standing on the creek bank leaning against a tree.

His left arm, numb and bleeding, hung limply at his side.

A dozen yards away the wreck of the *Roost* was burning fiercely, floating fragments of the ill-starred craft littering the water for a hundred feet up and down the small stream.

Rotherick was nowhere in sight, nor was the robber.

Capt. Paul was presently aware that some one was talking to him, and that the muzzle of a gun was staring him in the face.

"Don't ye try ter fight, 'cause I got the dead wood on ye. Now, tell me what's become o' Capt. Paul Jones. Was he in that blow-up?"

Alec was behind the rifle, and in his face was a strange mingling of grief and determination.

The young planter, in his borrowed garb, was not recognized by the boy, albeit the planter's hat was gone, and, but for the excitement of the moment, Alec's wits would have proved equal to the emergency.

"I'm Capt. Paul, Alec," answered Jones, weakly. "The man-o'-war's man, Rotherick, came aboard the flatboat, and we had a struggle. A lighted lanthorn was knocked into the hold on a lot of powder, and the magazine blew up."

"Capt. Paul!" cried Alec. "Yer own mother wouldn't have known ye in that get-up. Ye're hurt! Look at yer hand—it's all bloody."

"Yes," said the young planter, "I had a close call of it and I'm not myself, yet, by a long chalk. Get the horses, Alec. I'm dizzy and can hardly stand."

As he spoke, Capt. Paul sank down at the base of the tree, everything in his range of vision whirling about him.

For some time after that he had only a confused notion of what happened.

He was not unconscious, as he had been in his own house the evening before, but he was on the verge of it.

The rough treatment Rotherick had given him at the plantation might have had something to do with his hazy

condition; in the main, however, the explosion was to be held responsible.

How he had gained the shore when the deck of the flatboat heaved upward beneath him, Capt. Paul had not the slightest idea.

He remembered vaguely that Alec came with the horses and lifted him to his saddle; then that they threaded the woods.

Next, Dame Gilpin and her husband were helping him from the horse, and after that he was in a chair, Dame Gilpin attending to his arm and Master Gilpin holding a pewter mug of Madeira to his lips.

Presently he walked to a couch, assisted by the ferryman, and sank into a heavy slumber.

He slept out the remainder of that day and the whole of the succeeding night, apparently in as deep a trance as was Duncan Macbean; but it was a natural sleep, the sleep of a man who had endured much and was far spent with weariness.

His dreams had to do with the ebony box, intrusted to him by the Virginia patriots.

When he awoke, the morning sun was looking in at the open door and Terence O'Malley and Master Gilpin were standing at the head of the couch.

"Ah, ha!" cried O'Malley, "the lad's himself again. Faith, it's a wonder he's alive at all, at all."

"Yez may well say that same, Masther O'Malley," came an echoing brogue from the kitchen. It was Dame Gilpin who, like the dashing Terence, was a gift of the "Ould Sod" to the New World. "Many a man would have been dead long since av he had gone through all that Capt. Paul has done. Sure, it's a lad av iron he is."

"How do ye feel, captain?" asked Gilpin, as the young planter sat up on the couch.

"Heartly, thank you," smiled the young planter. "I must have slept well, I take it?"

"The whole night long, sir," said Gilpin.

Capt. Paul whistled incredulously.

"Where did you come from, O'Malley?" he inquired.

"I'm afield with some of the other planters tryin' to get a crack at old Truepenny Tyburn. They're north of the river, and I rode over here for a word with Master Gilpin."

"You thought you couldn't trust me to scatter this band of robbers?"

"Not so, me lad!" cried O'Malley. "We'd trust ye to scatter anything from a corporal's guard o' red coats

to a company o' the King's Own. Ye've done your work, Paul; the mangy breed is scattered by that night's work at your plantation an' the blowin' up of the *Roost*. The leader is tryin' to get clear, an' we're hot after him."

"You heard about the explosion, then?"

"Everyone has heard of it, up an' down the river. As near as we can make out, three o' the band lost their lives in the fight at your plantation, an' two more were found near the charred wreck o' the flatboat. That makes foive, an' old Truepenny was not strong enough in numbers to stand the loss of so many.

"The plantations, Paul, owin' to your gallant work, are well rid o' the band; those that are left are makin' for distant parts. I'm to leave ye now, happy in the thought that ye're yourself again."

"Hold hard a minute, Terence!" cried Paul. "When did you halt at my place last?"

"In the early hours of the mornin'."

"Had anyone called there inquiring for me?"

"Not a soul, me boy."

Capt. Paul was thinking of the man who was to call with the letter from Mr. Adams and the key to the ebony box.

The messenger had not yet arrived, and there was still time for him to make another attempt at recovering the papers.

"How was Duncan Macbean?"

Terence O'Malley shook his head.

"There's a strange case for ye! Bob Tichenor was there and he said Duncan's condition was the quarest thing he'd ever encountered. He lies quiet enough, breathin' natural and seemin'ly asleep. Sure, it must have been a powerful drug. But Tichenor thinks he'll come around all right, an' ye give him time."

O'Malley thereupon took his departure and Capt. Paul got up and stripped himself of the borrowed gear which he had donned on the flatboat.

Although his arm pained him, the numbness was gone, and, on the whole, it felt better.

A brief examination showed him that he was not to be crippled, nor to be long without the use of the hand.

Furthermore, he discovered that he had lost neither his sword nor his pistols. If he had not carried them ashore after the explosion, Alec must have found them and taken them in charge.

Anyhow, the weapons lay by the captain's bunk, in as good trim as ever they were.

A refreshing dip in cold spring water served still further in giving back to the young planter all his customary strength and vigor; and when he had joined the Gilpins in a hearty breakfast, he was primed for the road and eager to be about his work.

He had in mind a call at the house of Samuel Sparrow.

Master Sparrow's plantation lay on both sides of the river, and it was rather two plantations than one; each had its house and quarters, but the master himself lived on the south shore.

If Rotherick was to be believed, the Cronins had crossed over to the north side, thereby putting a broad sweep of water between them and Capt. Paul.

Whether they were beyond the Rappahannock still, or had left for other parts since the night they had fled from Capt. Paul's plantation, was the point the youth wished to settle by a call at Master Sparrow's.

Since Sparrow's mansion lay on his road to his own plantation, Capt. Paul would not be at much inconvenience in calling there.

When the morning meal was done, the young planter lost no time in taking to the road.

He followed the highroad, and not the bridle path.

Had he desired, he could have traveled the latter course and thus have gained a final look at the relic of the robber roost which he had so successfully invaded.

However, he had no wish to return to the spot which had witnessed the explosion that had cost two of the robbers their lives and came so near to costing him his own.

There was a languid warmth even in that early hour, and as he galloped through the heart of the thick woods, redbirds, catbirds and robins sang around him.

From some cause, his hope mounted high.

A feeling sprang in his breast that all was not lost, and that the messenger who was to call for the ebony box would ultimately receive it at his hands.

It would be difficult to account for this reassuring thought.

So far as the ebony box was concerned, the wiles of Mistress Betsy seemed to have been entirely successful.

Nevertheless, Capt. Paul spurred on with a more complacent spirit than he had had at any time since he had discovered the loss of the papers.

By and by he drew rein at Master Sparrow's door,

finding Master Sparrow himself enjoying a pipe on his veranda.

The gentleman's greeting was sour and uncordial, and it was plain his sad treatment at Capt. Paul's plantation still rankled in his bosom. The visitor was not invited to dismount, so he kept his saddle.

"May I inquire, Master Sparrow," said Capt. Paul, "if you have visitors here?"

"Gad, yes, Paul Jones," was the grumpy answer, "you may inquire, but 'tis all the good it will do you."

"Ladies from Williamsburg?" went on Capt. Paul, imperturbably. "Dame Cronin and her daughter, Betsy; Tories, I take it, as warm for King George as you are yourself."

"An' they be here; what, then?" demanded Master Sparrow.

"I would have talk with Mistress Betsy; that is all."

"No man enters my house," returned the planter, "except by my invitation."

"Mayhap you'd see fit to give the invitation, sir, an' I came here with Terence O'Malley and some of the lads he has at his back."

"Zounds, sir!" exclaimed Master Sparrow. "Dost dare to threaten me?"

"Nay, there is no need to wax hot over what I say," went on Capt. Paul, calmly. "If the ladies are not here——"

"They are not, sir; nor are they at my other place, across the Rappahannock. If ye seek that knowledge, there ye have it."

"I had it on fair authority that they were across the river; Mistress Betsy told me herself that they were bound there."

"Gad, Paul Jones, thou hast the manners of a stable-boy! Ye treated them so uncivilly they were obliged to fly your house i' the night, and sought refuge with the Rappahanock between you and them. Yesterday, in my own coach, I sent them to Williamsburg. There's for you, sir, an' ye think o' calling on me with Master O'Malley and his bravos.

"'Slife! When his majesty, God bless him! tames these rebellious Colonies, there are a few I shall hope to see swung higher than Haman. I will not mention names."

"No need," said Capt. Paul, coolly.

He would have baited the old Tory further had he not,

at that moment, glimpsed no less a horseman than Cato riding along the highroad, bound northward.

"Cato!" he shouted, whirling his horse and riding for the road. "Cato! Whither bound?"

Cato pulled up and awaited his master.

"I's lookin' fo' you, Marse Cap'n," said he. "We heard dat yo' was at Marse Gilpin's at de ferry, so I was goin' dere."

"What's the news, lad? Is Duncan worse?"

"Marse Duncan is about de same, sah. It wasn't about him I was goin' to see yo'."

"What, then? Speak out, an' be quick."

"A barkentine is hove to in de roads, off de plantation, ap'n—de barkentine *Fortune*, bound acrost de watah, ap'n Nicholas Biddle. Cap'n Biddle he 'low he want to see Marse Paul immedjity. He say he done got a lettah fo' you, an' dat you brought somethin' from Williamsburg dat he wants ter git."

Then, in spite of his new-born hopes, Capt. Paul's heart sank like lead.

Hère was the messenger in a hurry to secure the ebony box and its inclosed papers.

What was he to say when he met Capt. Biddle?

An ordeal was before him from which even his brave soul shrank. But there was nothing else for it but to face the issue.

## CHAPTER XII.

### CANNY DUNCAN MACBEAN.

As he approached the plantation along the highroad, Capt. Paul saw the barkentine riding the waters in the roads.

A gig was at the landing, with two sailors lounging at the snubposts and a fine figure of a mariner smoking a pipe and pacing the wharf.

Tossing his reins to Cato, Capt. Paul started for the landing.

He had a disagreeable communication to give Capt. Biddle, and wanted it over with.

As he passed the house Scip came running out.

"Marse Paul! Marse Paul! You's wanted in heah, sah!"

"In a few minutes, Scip," replied the young planter. "There's a gentleman at the landing who wants to see you, and——"

"Marse Duncan say he wants to see yo' right now!" insisted Scip.

"Marse Duncan?" came in startled tones from Capt. Paul. "Has he recovered his senses?"

"Dat he has, sah. He come to a li'l while ago, an' de fus' thing he ask fo' you. I done tole him Cap'n Biddle was heah to see Marse Paul, and dat Cato done gone fo' you; so Marse Duncan say de minit yo' come to send yo' in where he is."

Down at the landing Capt. Biddle was shouting and waving his hands.

It was plain he wanted Capt. Paul, but Capt. Paul, instead of going to him, entered the house and waited on Duncan Macbean.

The brave old overseer sat in a chair by the fireplace. He was the same Duncan he had been, and seemed none the worse for his long sleep under the spell of the narcotic.

"Paul, lad!" he exclaimed, rising and grasping the young planter's hand. "Come, I maun speak wi' ye——"

"But the messenger has come for that box, Duncan, and I have got to tell him that Tory woman took it."

"Ye'll no be tellin' him a lie, boy, will ye?"

"You do not understand, Duncan," went on Capt. Paul, "for all this happened while you were under influence of that powerful drug. Mistress Betsy Cronin was really at the door, watching and listening, when I opened the secret tile and placed the ebony box in the compartment——"

"Losh!" said Duncan, "well, I knew it."

"Old Truepenny and his band tried to steal the sloop, but I was aboard her and gave them a pretty go for their trouble. The sloop was saved and, as soon as she had been warped back to her moorings, I started for the house.

"There had been considerable popping of firelocks, and I felt sure, if all was right with you, you would have shown yourself. When I came here, Mistress Betsy, candle in hand, was running her fingers over the tiles, looking for the one that concealed the box."

Duncan Macbean chuckled in his beard.

"Go on, lad," said he. "Why do you hang fire?"

"What are you laughing about?" demanded Capt. Paul. "'Tis a grave matter, Duncan, and not to be treated lightly."

"So, so, boy. Proceed wi' your harrowin' tale."

Capt. Paul could not understand Duncan's manner, but continued:

"I entered the room and taxed Mistress Betsy with her

perfidy. Then I saw that the black patch she wore on her right cheek was gone, revealing a little 'S'-shaped scar. Duncan, she was the very same woman who sought to waylay me on the Williamsburg road."

"Fine I ken that!" exclaimed Duncan. "I had it in my noddle all along. But, proceed, lad, proceed. It's a rare tale ye're tellin'."

"While I was engaged with Mistress Betsy, who should enter the room but Skipper Cockle——"

"Cockle!" gasped Macbean. "Ye're no tellin' me Cockle was here?"

"The very same man, Duncan. He came, took a sword from above the mantel and we had to cut and thrust all around the room. He stumbled over the couch, the deer-skins fell aside and I saw you there, stretched at full length on the floor. Not knowing what foul play had befallen you, the sight of your form maddened me. I should have run Cockle through had not another struck me from behind. The man-o'-war's man, Duncan!"

"A braw plot, that!" cried Duncan, breathlessly interested. "How came the Cronins mixed with such a breed o' vermin?"

"They're all for the king, and against the Colonies. That is the principle that drew them together. In some way, Mistress Betsy got wind of that box in Williamsburg, and was waiting for me on the road with men to help her. But to go on:

"A couple of blows dealt from the rear laid me across the cot well-nigh as lifeless as yourself, Duncan. When I drifted back to the world, the Cronins were gone, Cockle was gone, the man-o'-war's man was gone! More than that, the secret tile was open and the ebony box was gone!

"I have tried to recover it, and, in doing so, have met with some strange happenings. But of these more anon. Just now I cannot delay longer, but must wait on Capt. Biddle. He probably wonders why I linger here when he is so anxious to have talk with me."

"Hoith, lad, not so fast. I've listened to your tale, an' 'tis right that ye listen to mine."

"But Capt. Biddle——"

"He has waited so long, let him wait a wee bit longer. Till the end o' my days, Paul, I shall smell my bombo before I drink of it. Had I done so that night, there would have been no trance for old Duncan.

"The girl came while I sat here smoking an' thinkin' She talked o' this an' that, but never a word about the box or the papers. I saw her eyes gang now an' ther to the fireplace, and I had suspicions.

"Weel, she sat by the table and she did some playin wi' her slim fingers about the mugs. I thought naething o' it, fool that I was. Then she poured some bombo, and we drank together; then, by an' by, I was off to the land o' Nod, realizin' what had happened, but no more able to prevent what was comin' than a bairn.

"Yes, somehow, I was fu' content as I dropped asleep. Can ye guess why?"

"This is no time for guessing," answered Capt. Paul, sharply. "Duncan, all this can wait until after I see Biddle."

"It can no wait," answered the Highlander, stoutly. "An' ye won't guess why I was content, I'll tell ye. Because," and here he leaned toward Capt. Paul, his old eyes winking cannily, "because, my lad, I had opened that secret place early i' th' evenin' an' removed the ebony box."

Paul was on his feet with a gasp. The overseer's words had fair stunned him.

"You had removed the box?" he repeated, blankly.

"Ay, lad. I feared the young woman; an' I was sure she had listened in the hall while ye put the box away an' told me o' it. So I opened the secret place an' took it away. 'Twas on my own responsibility——"

"Where is the box now?" whispered Capt. Paul, huskily, "where is it?"

Duncan Macbean lifted the top of Capt. Paul's tobacco jar.

"Had ye done some smokin', lad," said he, dryly, "on had I awoke before, much worryin' ye maun hae been saved."

From the tobacco jar, a grim smile on his lips, Duncan took the ebony box and handed it to Capt. Paul.

The young planter stared for a moment; then he caught the overseer's hand fervently.

"I trow well, Duncan Macbean," said he, with emotion, "ye ha'e saved my honor this day."

"Your honor, lad, is as dear to Duncan Macbean as his

m. But your honor was not concerned. Ye had done  
 that mortal man could to haud the box an' deliver  
 to——"

Heavy steps resounded in the hall, and a well-built man  
 sea togs entered the room.

"Nicholas Biddle, gentlemen," said he. "Which o' ye  
 Capt. Paul Jones?"

"I, sir," answered the young planter, stepping for-  
 ward.

"I have a letter for you. The wind serves, and I must  
 ray in my ship at the earliest possible moment."

Capt. Biddle took a letter from the pocket of his coat.

"Will you please to read this, Capt. Jones?" he asked.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### CONCLUSION.

The letter, as expected, was from the hand of Mr.  
 Adams, and requested delivery of certain papers brought  
 from Williamsburg.

"The letter is all right, as far as it goes, Capt. Biddle,"  
 said the young planter. "Have you anything else about  
 it that proves your authority in this matter?"

"A key, Capt. Jones," and the skipper produced a  
 minute key, swinging about his neck by a bit of cord.

He was told to be careful of the letter and the key, and  
 they have been by me night and day from the moment I  
 received them."

"This box I was instructed to deliver to you on receipt  
 of the letter from Mr. Adams; but you were also to open  
 the box."

"I will do so, an' the key fits the lock."

The key fitted and the box was opened, revealing a  
 packet of papers.

"Art satisfied, Capt. Jones?" inquired Biddle.

"Perfectly."

The ebony box was closed, locked and Capt. Biddle  
 transferred it to an inner pocket of his coat.

"That is all, I believe?" said Biddle.

"One thing more, captain," said Capt. Paul. "Cæsar!"

The black dodged into the room from the hall.

"Yass, Marse Cap'n!"

"A tankard of that right Madeira."

Tankard and goblets were brought, and the Madeira  
 poured. True to his resolve, canny Duncan Macbean  
 sniffed of his glass while holding it in his hand.

"A toast, Capt. Biddle," said Capt. Paul. "Will you  
 honor us with one?"

"Right cheerfully. Standin, an' you please."

They rose to their feet.

"To the Colonies!" murmured Capt. Biddle. "May  
 these dispatches, whose purport I know not, aid our peo-  
 ple in the coming war with Great Britain!"

Eyes to eyes, they drank the toast and set their goblets  
 down.

"No more," said Capt. Biddle, briskly. "I have tarried  
 too long already. Farewell to you, gentlemen! I trust,  
 Capt. Jones, when we meet again 'twill be in ships on  
 the high seas, with the British before us."

"Amen to that, captain!" said John Paul Jones.

"I maun fight ashore," put in Duncan. "The sea was  
 never to my likin'."

They accompanied Capt. Biddle to the landing and  
 cheered him as he put off to the barkentine in his gig.

Then they waited on the wharf until the barkentine  
 spread her sails and vanished along the Rappahannock.

"Hast any idea, Paul, what those papers are about?"

"No more than Biddle; yet I imagine they are secret  
 instructions for some trusted agent in Europe."

"I had thought the like."

"Duncan," said Capt. Paul, once more grasping the  
 overseer's hand, "I shall never forget what you have saved  
 me this day."

"The fact that I hae been usefu' to ye is mair than  
 enough, boy," said Duncan, and no more ever passed  
 between them concerning the ebony box.

That afternoon, Terence O'Malley and his riders came  
 back; and with them came a bushy-bearded gentleman in  
 buckskin, his hands tied behind and his feet roped under  
 his saddle girth.

No less a personage he proved than old Truepenny  
 Tyburn.

He was much chagrined over his capture, and loudly  
 declared that Skipper Cockle and the Cronins had been  
 the cause of his downfall.

Finding him bitter against the skipper and in talkative mood, Capt. Paul proceeded to quiz him.

"How long have you known Skipper Cockle?"

"Three days belike, and they were three days too many for my own good."

"Did he engage you to help steal certain papers——"

"I know nothing of any papers. He paid me fifty guineas down to help steal yon sloop. I got the guineas but Master Cockle did not get his sloop. Yet even the guineas are gone, an' here am I."

"Where are your followers?"

"At the bottom of the Rappahannock, two blown up with the *Roost*, and a few more at large in the forest. We did bravely here, Capt. Paul, until you came."

"You made war upon me," said the young planter, "and have only yourself to blame for what befell."

"Mayhap; yet it boots not to think of what might have been."

"Dost know what has become of Cockle?"

Old Truepenny swore.

"No," said he, "nor care. He is somewhere among the plantations, hot with rage for you. He swears he will have your life, an' he lives. I have sworn a like oath, so look to yourself should I cheat the hangman."

"I will not worry much on your score, old Truepenny; nor on Skipper Cockle's, either."

"It's a fine fighter he is, Paul," spoke up O'Malley. "Faith, before we downed him he had broken half a dozen heads with his rifle butt. If he had had powder, there'd have been some lives lost."

Capt. Paul knew well how it chanced that old Truepenny was out of powder. Rotherick had not been able to get away from the *Roost* with any, and the robbers' store had gone to perdition with the lawless craft.

"How about Rotherick, old Truepenny?"

"Ye're askin' more than I can tell, Capt. Paul," answered the prisoner. "But the man-o'-war's man must be alive; he, like Cockle, was born to grace a yardarm, so he'll live till he gets his deserts."

"Whence did you come before making these plantations your prey?"

"My past is a closed book," frowned the robber, "let it be. I'll tell ye naught of it."

Seeming to realize that talk could only injure his case from that on the prisoner held his peace.

He was taken to Yorktown, tried and neatly hung.

O'Malley afterward told of the overland trip to the York River, and of a futile attempt, presumably made by some of the escaped members of the gang, to rescue their old leader.

Capt. Paul learned, before many days, that Dame Cronin and her fiery daughter were at the Cronin town house in Williamsburg.

He did not trouble them with their misdeeds; loyal to the king as Mistress Betsy was, she felt, perhaps, that she was doing her duty in her unsuccessful attempt to wrest the patriots' papers from the hands of Capt. Paul.

"Ye're slow to tell the vixen in these ladies o' quality lad," observed Duncan Macbean, sagely. "A pretty fact an' a pair o' bright eyes have proved mony a man's un doin'. Remember that."

"A woman in distress, Duncan, has a right to every man's sympathy and aid," answered the young planter.

"Losh!" said Duncan, with a shrug. "Chivalry, as ye call it, is like to entrap ye, one o' these days, with more serious consequences. I suspected that young woman o' designs on ye the minute she showed herself at the plantation. She was bound for Master Sparrow's, over the river! Ha! She was far afield an' did not even excuse herself by sayin' she was lost."

Hugon, released by Capt. Paul and his back salvaged with a guinea, was started toward Williamsburg with the chariot and horses.

"A guinea wasted," quote Duncan. "Will ye no learn to be economical, Paul?"

The young planter's hand and arm healed quickly, and he was soon again in the midst of a series of thrilling adventures.

What these were, the reader may learn by reading the story to follow, which will be entitled "Paul Jones Double; or, Cruise of the *Floating Feather*."



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